

THE SONG OF SONGS IN THE EARLY LATIN CHRISTIAN TRADITION:
A STUDY OF THE *TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO* OF GREGORY OF ELVIRA AND ITS CONTEXT

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The thesis is entirely my own work and no portion of it represents work done in collaboration with others. Neither has the dissertation been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The *Song of Songs* was the most commented upon biblical text in medieval Europe and became the cornerstone of the Western mystical tradition, but our knowledge of its use in Latin Christian communities before the time of Ambrose and Jerome is largely fragmentary. The thesis is a study of the use and interpretation of the *Song* in the Latin West during the period 250 – 380 CE, with a focus on the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* of Gregory of Elvira (c. 320-392), which is the earliest extant *Song* commentary composed in Latin. The research demonstrates that there was a robust tradition of *Song* exegesis in early Latin Christianity, although the mystical-affective interpretation that marks the later tradition is entirely absent. The poem is, rather, interpreted in an ecclesiological mode and is put in the service of communal self-definition. Gregory's *Tractatus*, which I argue should be dated to 350-55, is a key source in recovering this largely lost tradition.

The first part of the thesis traces in detail all of the citations of the *Song* in Latin Christian literature during the period in question, focusing on the writings of Cyprian of Carthage, Optatus of Milevis, Tyconius, Pacian of Barcelona, and Augustine. There emerge a cluster of passages from the *Song* that become key proof texts in ecclesiological controversies in North Africa and Spain.

The second part engages problems in Gregorian scholarship, particularly issues pertaining to Gregory's supposed direct knowledge and use of Origen's writings. Scholars assert that his exegetical writings reflect the Origenist turn of the late fourth century. Using the tools of source criticism and theological analysis, I contest this hypothesis, demonstrating that the evidence of Origen's influence has been greatly exaggerated and that the points of contact which do exist must be explained with reference to intermediary Latin sources.

The third part sets the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* within its precise historical context and offers a close reading of the text, giving an account of its Christology, ecclesiology, and use of sources. The *Tractatus*, I argue, represents a 'fusion' of a distinctly Latin tradition of ecclesiological exegesis with a particularly Spanish mode of Christological reflection, which treats the enfleshment of the Word in the Incarnation and the embodiment of the risen Christ in the church as conceptually inseparable.

Related historical problems, such as the chronology of Gregory's career, are treated in appendices.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AW	Athanasius Werke
BLE	Bulletin de la Littérature Ecclésiastique
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EOMIA	Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumentorum Iuris Antiquissima
FC	Fontes Christiani
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
PG	Migne, Patrologia Graeca
PL	Migne, Patrologia Latina
PLRE	Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire
RBen	Revue Bénédictine
REAug	Revue des Études Augustiniennes
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
VC	Vigiliae Christianae

The following editions/translations are cited according to the last name of the author:

Butterworth	G.W. Butterworth (trans.). <i>Origen: On First Principles</i> . Gloucester, 1973.
Feder	A. Feder (ed.). <i>CSEL</i> 65. Vienna, 1916.
Koetschau	Paul Koetschau (ed.). <i>Origenes Werke 5: De Principiis</i> . Leipzig, 1913.
Wickham	Lionel Wickham. <i>Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth Century Church</i> . Liverpool, 1997.
Schulz-Flügel	E. Schulz-Flügel. <i>Gregorius Eliberritanus: Epithalamium sive Explanatio in Canticis Canticorum</i> . Fribourg, 1994.

* Primary sources are abbreviated according to the sigla provided in the CCSL and SC editions of the text, where available. Texts not edited in those series follow standard conventions of abbreviation. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

The *Song of Songs* enjoyed immense popularity in medieval Western Europe. There are nearly one hundred commentaries and homilies from the sixth to fifteenth centuries extant – more than exist for any other single book of the bible during the period.¹ This vividly erotic poem, written in the form of a dialogue between two lovers, was read exclusively as an allegory: the bridegroom represented Christ and the bride was variously interpreted as the church, the individual soul, and the consecrated virgin. The *Song* became one of the cornerstones of the Western mystical tradition, profoundly influencing the medieval understanding of ‘the relationship between the life of the body and of the soul, and thus between human and divine love’, as Ann Matter asserts in her magisterial study.² It also exercised considerable influence on popular piety, particularly devotion to the Virgin Mary.³

The origins of this vibrant interpretive tradition lie, however, in relative obscurity. Only two Latin commentaries are extant before the sixth century, and the authors of both – Gregory of Elvira and Apponius – are relative unknowns.⁴ Additionally, only Ambrose and Jerome employ the *Song* with any frequency in their writings. Unsurprisingly, the patristic period receives little attention in the scholarly monographs devoted to tracing and explaining the rise of *Song* exegesis in the Latin West.⁵ There are, moreover, only two studies devoted exclusively to Latin patristic

¹ E.A. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 3. For a detailed list of sources, including full bibliographic information, see pp. 203-10.

² Matter, *Voice*, p. 3.

³ Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). The emergence of a specifically ‘Marian’ reading of the *Song of Songs*, in which the bride is identified as the Virgin Mary, occurs in the twelfth century. She persuasively demonstrates that the origins of such a mode of interpretation are rooted in the Carolingian liturgy of the Assumption, in which texts from *Luke* and the *Song of Songs* are joined in the antiphons.

⁴ The *Tractatus de Epithalamio* of Gregory of Elvira, bishop in Hispania Baetica in the latter half of the fourth century, will be discussed in great detail throughout the present study. Little is known of Apponius, but the prevailing hypothesis is that he was a northern Italian writing in the early to mid-fifth century. See the argument and bibliography in Mark Elliott, *The Song of Songs and Christology, 381-451* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 40-9.

⁵ F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien: Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abenlandes bis um 1200* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1958), provides a detailed historical analysis beginning with

exegesis of the *Song* – an article by Elizabeth Clark and an unpublished Cambridge doctoral dissertation by Nathalie Henry.⁶

Despite the lacunate state of modern scholarship, a clear narrative regarding the origins of the Latin exegetical tradition can be discerned. Origen of Alexandria is the font. In his ten-volume commentary and series of short homilies on the *Song*,⁷ he offers an allegorical interpretation that treats the bride as both the church and as the individual soul. He asserts in the lengthy prologue to his *Commentary* that the theme of the poem is ‘love itself [*amore ipso*]’⁸ – not that ‘carnal’ love, in which the Greeks were often ensnared, but rather that spiritual *caritas* by which the soul is ‘enflamed towards the Word of God’.⁹ It was thus, so the narrative goes, in the late fourth century when Origen’s mystical exegesis was made available to Latin audiences through the homilies of Ambrose and the translations of Jerome and Rufinus that the *Song of Songs* began to influence the shape of Western theology and spirituality. Ambrose invoked language from the *Song* in his homilies on the praise of virgins – circulated as the *De virginibus* –

Hippolytus, and he devotes more attention to the patristic period than any other subsequent commentator will (pp. 27-59); E.A. Matter, *Voice*, is a literary analysis, which charts the development of the ‘genre’ of *Song* commentary in the medieval Latin West. A. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1990), ignores the late antique period entirely in her Jungian psychoanalytic reading of the tradition, as does D. Turner, *Eros and Allegory: The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1995), in his philosophical account.

⁶ E.A. Clark, ‘The Uses of the Song of Songs: Origen and the Later Latin Fathers’, in *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Studies in Women and Religion 20; Queenston, ON: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986 [reprint of 1981 original]), pp. 387-427; N. Henry, *The Song of Songs and Virginity: The Study of a Paradox in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: unpublished PhD diss., 1999). There are, however, several articles on the use of the *Song* in individual writers; see, e.g., F.B.A. Asideu, ‘The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism’ *VC* 55/3 (2001), pp. 299-317; P. Cox Miller, ‘The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome’s Letter to Eustochium’ *J ECS* 1 (1993), pp. 21-46.

⁷ The *Commentary*, so Eusebius tells us, is in ten books, with the first five written in Athens, and the remaining five completed upon his return to Caesarea (*HE* 6.32.1-2). This would place its composition around the years 245-7. Regarding the *Homilies*, Jerome had access to two alone, and there is no other mention of them in Antiquity that would indicate how many Origen delivered. It is traditionally estimated that they were delivered in the years following 245, on the basis of Eusebius’ remark that Origen did not allow his διαλέξεις to be recorded until he was older than sixty years of age (*HE* 6.36.1). J. Christopher King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom’s Perfect Marriage Song* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 10-11, in my view, successfully refutes the equation of διαλέξεις with homilies, and argues persuasively for placing his preaching on the *Song* several years before the composition of the *Commentary*, to the years 241-2.

⁸ *Comm. In Cant.* prol.1.8 (SC 375, p. 86).

⁹ *Comm. In Cant.* prol.2.46 (SC 375, p. 122).

and in his account of the soul's ascent to God in the *De Isaac vel anima*,¹⁰ and Jerome drew frequently from the poem in his vivid and striking eroticization of the virgin's encounter with Christ in the famous *Epistula ad Eustochium*.¹¹ Gregory of Elvira is believed to have relied heavily on Jerome's Latin translation of Origen to construct his polemical vision of the pure virgin church in his *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. This 'Origenist' turn coincided with the increasing instability of the later Roman Empire, which Henry has argued produced a trend of 'ascetic and rigorist reading of the Song of Songs'.¹²

It is undeniable that Origen, Ambrose, and Jerome's use of the *Song* decisively shaped the medieval Latin mystical tradition. But are scholars correct in positing that the *Song of Songs* was a neglected text in Western Christianity prior to the late fourth century? The evidence, although fragmentary, suggests otherwise. The present study seeks to examine the use and interpretation of the *Song of Songs* in early Latin Christian communities during the period of 250-380 – that is, from the career of Cyprian to the time of Ambrose and Jerome – with a particular focus upon the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* of Gregory of Elvira, a text which I date to the middle, rather than the end, of the fourth century.¹³ I shall demonstrate that there was a robust tradition of *Song* exegesis in early Latin Christianity, which was primarily ecclesiological, not 'psychological' or mystical, in nature; the poem was put in the service of communal self-definition and little attention was paid to its erotic imagery. Evidence for this largely lost exegetical tradition can be found in the writings of Cyprian and fourth century North African Christians (including Augustine) as well as in the fragmentary remains of the commentaries of Reticus of Autun and Victorinus of Poetovio. Gregory is the heir to this tradition – not to the Origenism of the late fourth century – and his *Tractatus* represents its most complete (extant) expression. His Christological exegesis of the *Song* is not, *pace* Matter, a transposition of Origen's psychological mode of interpretation, but rather flows from a Spanish theological trajectory that treats the

¹⁰ See, e.g., *De Virginibus*. 1.7-9; 2.6; 3.5.

¹¹ *Ep.* 22.1, 7, 17, 19, 24-5.

¹² Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 5.

¹³ On which see the conclusion of chapter five.

enfleshment of the Word in the Incarnation and the embodiment of the risen Christ in the church as conceptually inseparable. It was in the waning decades of the fourth century that this ecclesiological tradition became absorbed by the mystical and ascetic interpretations of Ambrose, Jerome, Apponius, and later Gregory the Great, although it clung tenaciously to life in early medieval Spain.¹⁴

I believe that scholars have overlooked this ecclesiological tradition for two key reasons. First, much of our evidence for it has been lost and it is simply tedious to devote one's time to tracking down and analyzing citations of the *Song* buried in polemical literature, especially when such rich commentaries and homilies of later exegetes remain understudied. Secondly, and indeed more seriously, our key witness is Gregory of Elvira, a Spanish bishop whose life has all but been erased from the pages of history and whose literary remains required extensive philological research to be properly identified.¹⁵ The complex problems of biography, textual transmission, use of sources, and exegetical and theological method that mark Gregorian studies have received precious little attention. The lone English monograph devoted to Gregory is little more than a catena of his reflections on ecclesiology;¹⁶ there is a useful Italian volume on Gregory's exegesis,¹⁷ no systematic study in French or German,¹⁸ and a handful of Spanish studies, of which some are of dubious value.¹⁹ A proper interpretation of the *Tractatus* requires us to ascertain the likely date of composition, the method of interpretation, the sources that are employed, and the aim of the work. Current scholarship on Gregory does not provide many satisfying answers.

¹⁴ Evidenced by the exclusively ecclesiological focus of the *In Cantica Salomonis explicatio mystica* of Justus of Urgel (c. early 6th century; PL 67:961-94).

¹⁵ See the detailed discussion and bibliography in chapter three.

¹⁶ F.J. Buckley, *Christ and the Church According to Gregory of Elvira* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964).

¹⁷ C. Vona, *Gregorio Di Elvira: Il Tractatus de Libris Sacrarum Scripturarum* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1970).

¹⁸ Although one perhaps could mention H. Jordan, *Die Theologie der neuentdeckten Predigten Novatianus, eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig, 1902), since it is a study of Gregory's *Tractatus de Libris Sacrarum Scripturarum*, which he erroneously attributes to Novatian.

¹⁹ J. Collantes Lozano, *San Gregorio de Elvira: Estudio Sobre Su Ecclesiología* (Granada, 1954); E. Mazorra, *El Luciferianismo de Gregorio de Elvira* (Granada, 1967); J.A.M. Gómez, *La Exégesis Como Instrumento de Creación Cultural: El Testimonio de las Obras de Gregorio de Elvira* (Antigüedad y Cristianismo 17; Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2000).

The dissertation thus consists of three parts. In Part One, I give a thorough analysis of the citations of the *Song of Songs* in Latin patristic literature before 380 – that is, before the circulation of the sermons of Ambrose and the ascetic letters of Jerome – as well as an attempted reconstruction of the lost commentaries of Victorinus and Reticus, to demonstrate the deeply ecclesiological nature of the early tradition and as background to Gregory’s *Tractatus*. In Part Two, I engage various problems in modern scholarship pertaining to the study of the *Tractatus*, particularly Gregory’s supposed Origenism, which has led scholars to date his exegetical works to the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Using the tools of source-criticism and theological analysis, I demonstrate that the evidence of Origen’s influence has been greatly exaggerated and that the points of contact which do exist must be explained with reference to intermediary Latin sources. In Part Three, I offer a close reading of the *Tractatus* itself, giving an account of its Christology, ecclesiology, and use of earlier sources. I argue that the theological, political, and ecclesiastical concerns of the work suggest a date in the late 340s or early 350s, rather than the 380s or later.²⁰ The *Tractatus* represents a ‘fusion’ of a distinctly Latin tradition of ecclesiological exegesis with a particularly Spanish mode of Christological reflection. The remainder of the Introduction provides a history of research on the topic of the interpretation of the *Song* in the Latin West.

EARLY LATIN EXEGESIS OF THE *SONG OF SONGS* IN RECENT RESEARCH

Friedrich Ohly was the first scholar to attempt a synthetic overview of the entire Latin tradition of *Song* exegesis, from Late Antiquity to the thirteenth century. He dedicated over thirty pages to the patristic material (that is, before the sixth century), but a sizeable portion is devoted to Ambrose.²¹ He mentions the lost commentaries of Victorinus and Reticus in passing, and Gregory merits a mere two and a half pages, despite his relative

²⁰ This early date is usually precluded *a priori* on the grounds that Gregory was not yet then bishop. For my revised chronology of his career, see Appendix Two.

²¹ Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, pp. 27-59. For Ambrose, see pp. 32-45.

importance.²² Ohly's monograph, as we shall see, serves as the basis upon which subsequent scholars will build their claim for Gregory's knowledge of Origen as well as Hippolytus; he asserts, 'Im dritten Viertel des vierten Jahrhunderts entstanden, sind diese *Tractatus de Epithalamio* von Einflüssen Hippolyts und des Origenes, deren Schriften Gregor von Elvira kannte'.²³ He does, however, assert that Gregory developed his own unique approach to the *Song*. Hippolytus interpreted the poem as the story of the church's birth out of the synagogue ('der Synagoge hervorwachsende Kirche') and Origen focused upon the inner life and the church as the locus of the mystical experience ('das innere Leben und die Erfahrung der Seele innerhalb der Kirche'), whereas for Gregory the entire poem turns on the interpretation of the church as 'der mystische Leib Christi'.²⁴ This, indeed, sets Gregory's interpretation almost in opposition to that of Hippolytus, although Ohly does not develop this point. Ohly provides straightforward textual analysis and does not make any attempt to date the *Tractatus* or situate it historically.

It would be over twenty years before the publication of another detailed treatment of Latin patristic exegesis of the *Song*, Elizabeth Clark's 'The Uses of the Song of Songs: Origen and the Later Latin Fathers'.²⁵ Her primary interest is in detailing the positive approach towards Judaism that Origen adopts in his *Commentary* and tracing its reception in later Latin commentators. She argues, rather radically, that the mystical and philosophical elements in the *Commentary* 'are secondary to the distinguishing motif that grounds Origen's exegesis in a particular time and place: the union of Jew and Gentile in the Christian Church'.²⁶ In her estimation, the eschatological movement of the work is akin to that in *Romans* 9-11, in which the Jews are restored to their proper place as the chosen people of God alongside Gentile Christians at the eschaton. Later Latin readers, however, 'eager to uncover the

²² Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, pp. 27-31.

²³ Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, pp. 28-9.

²⁴ Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, p. 29.

²⁵ Clark, 'Uses'.

²⁶ Clark, 'Uses', p. 380.

“mystical” aspects of Origen’s exegesis, abandoned the historical significance of this point’.²⁷

Specifically, these later readers are Gregory of Elvira, Ambrose, Jerome, Apponius, and Augustine. She finds three unifying themes in their writings on the *Song*: ‘first, they understood the Song of Songs as an exhortation to Christian asceticism; second, they developed a Mariological interpretation of the book; and third, they exploited the Song to address contemporary controversies on the nature of the Church’.²⁸ Gregory figures little in Clark’s account, for the reasons that his *Tractatus* has little to say about asceticism or Mariology and he does not specifically name any heretical opponents, making it difficult to locate ‘the contemporary controversies’ he may have been addressing. She is clear that he knows Origen and Hippolytus (citing Ohly), has a ‘considerably dimmer’ view of Judaism than Origen, and evidences little interest in asceticism.²⁹

Clark astutely notes the profound shift marked by the ascetically-inclined exegesis of Ambrose and Jerome.³⁰ She is likely right to suggest that the application of the *Song*’s erotic language to the *bodies* of Christian virgins ‘might have surprised’ Origen, who so strenuously warned his readers against taking the *Song* in a corporeal manner.³¹ But her near silence on Gregory, who, unlike Jerome or Ambrose, composed a systematic commentary on the text, suggests that his interpretation does not fit so neatly into the matrix of late fourth century exegesis. Moreover, she is not entirely clear precisely how the third trajectory – the ecclesiological dimension – is in any way unique to this later period and related to Origen’s exegesis; indeed, she affirms that the interpretation of the Donatists and Augustine is firmly rooted in a pattern initiated by Cyprian.

Several years later, Ann Matter published *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, the first English-language monograph devoted

²⁷ Clark, ‘Uses’, p. 380.

²⁸ Clark, ‘Uses’, p. 401.

²⁹ Clark, ‘Uses’, pp. 400, 402.

³⁰ On their interpretation of the bride as consecrated virgin, see Clark, ‘Uses’, pp. 402-7.

³¹ Clark, ‘Uses’, p. 410.

to the *Song*. Rather than provide an analysis of the commentaries in historical sequence as Ohly had done decades earlier, she attempts to argue the thesis that exegesis of the *Song of Songs* developed into a discrete sub-genre of medieval Latin literature. By this she means that it is a coherent, self-referencing tradition that is constantly undergoing internal transformation.³² She documents these transformations thoroughly, looking at the ways in which patristic and medieval *Song* commentaries reflect changing notions about the nature of the Church, the mystical encounter of the soul with God, and devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Much like Ohly and Clark, Matter asserts that Origen lies at the heart of the Latin tradition: ‘The essential framework of medieval Latin commentary on the Song of Songs developed in the rarified intellectual atmosphere of Alexandria’.³³ It is the translation of his *Commentary* and *Homilies* into Latin at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries that inaugurates the tradition. Indeed, so important are these texts that she shows virtually no interest in the sermons of Ambrose or letters of Jerome.³⁴ Gregory of Elvira does occupy something of a privileged place in her narrative, for she argues that his *Tractatus* ‘shows the first stage of development from the Latin translations of Origen on the Song of Songs, for his commentary is original in scope and structure and in its overall purpose: polemic against heretics’.³⁵

Several problems immediately become apparent in Matter’s account – not simply issues of interpretation, but, more worryingly, issues of historical accuracy. For example, she describes the collection of Gregory’s homilies known as the *Tractatus Origenis* as ‘a compendium of selected passages on Genesis which shares material with Augustine’s *City of God*’.³⁶ The *Tractatus Origenis*, however, consists of homilies on a number of Old Testament books and *Acts*, not simply *Genesis*, and there is no clear relationship with the *City of God*. More apparent is Gregory’s reliance upon Tertullian, Novatian, Victorinus of Poetovio, and (Pseudo-)Cyprian.³⁷ Matter also erroneously

³² Matter, *Voice*, pp. 6-16.

³³ Matter, *Voice*, p. 20.

³⁴ They merit a brief mention in passing at Matter, *Voice*, p. 36.

³⁵ Matter, *Voice*, p. 87.

³⁶ Matter, *Voice*, p. 87.

³⁷ On the sources of the *Tractatus Origenis*, see chapters three and four.

points to the prologue of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* as clear evidence of Gregory's debt to Jerome's translation of Origen's *Homilies*, although it is demonstrably spurious.³⁸ Thirdly, she misunderstands the nature of the ecclesiological conflict that plagued the pro-Nicene party in the aftermath of the synod of Ariminum (359), at which some four hundred bishops subscribed to a Homoian creed. She argues that 'Gregory of Elvira opposed allowing those who had made a liason of convenience with Arianism to re-enter the Nicene ranks by a simple profession of faith; like the Donatist party in the next century, he believed that only those who had not been led astray by false teachers could make up the spotless body of Christ'.³⁹ We actually have very little evidence of Gregory's precise stand on the issue. But we do know that the Luciferian schismatics, with whom Gregory is frequently linked, were only concerned about bishops. There was no controversy over rebaptism or how to readmit the laity to communion; those who confessed the Nicene creed were to be admitted with the imposition of hands.⁴⁰ The sole question under debate was whether lapsed bishops could retain their episcopal chair in the Nicene communion.⁴¹ We must thus question the care with which she has approached the material.

There are also two problems of interpretation that mark her brief account. The first is her claim that throughout the *Tractatus* 'it is easy to hear echoes of the struggle between the Nicene and Arian Christians'.⁴² She is, however, resolutely silent on where and what specifically these echoes are. Matter is unable to point to even an oblique reference to the Nicene creed or the theological issues that were contested by Latin 'Arians' such as Valens and Ursacius – the *homoousion*, the impassibility of the Word, and the eternal generation of the Son.⁴³ Secondly, one might contest her assertion that

³⁸ Matter, *Voice*, p. 88. Although the editor of the text for the CCSL treated the prologue as genuine, it was demonstrated to be a later interpolation by R. Dottore, 'Un Testo dei Moralia di S. Gregorio Magno Negli <<Excerpta S. Gregorii in Cantica Canticorum>> di Taio e nella <<Praefatio Epithalamii>> di Gregorio di Elvira' *Divinitas* 24/1 (1980), pp. 324-39, at pp. 329-38.

³⁹ Matter, *Voice* p. 87.

⁴⁰ Indeed, the laity were not really the problem. Only the clergy would have had the opportunity to subscribe to 'Arian' formulae.

⁴¹ On the Luciferian schism, see chapter five.

⁴² Matter, *Voice*, p. 89.

⁴³ The theology of Ursacius and Valens can be reconstructed from documents such as the so-called 'Western Creed of Serdica' (a polemical document composed by pro-Athanasian bishops, including

the *Tractatus* is a ‘polemic against heretics’ on the grounds that only two sections of the entire work actually treat the problem of heresy (*Cant.* 2.8-23 [exegesis of *Song* 1:7-8]; 4.24-5 [exegesis of *Song* 2:15]). There is no doubt a strongly polemical edge to the work – directed against Jews, heretics, and pagans – but this looks far less innovative when read against the backdrop of other third and fourth-century Latin exegesis of the *Song*.

Matter cannot ultimately be judged too harshly, for her work is strongest and most compelling when she comes to treat the medieval sources proper. However, her mishandling of the earliest material leads her to overemphasize Origen’s influence upon the origins of the Latin tradition. As the authoritative Anglophone work on the subject, this will inevitably lead to further misinterpretation.

Nathalie Henry’s unpublished Cambridge doctoral dissertation, *The Song of Songs and Virginity: The Study of a Paradox in Early Christian Literature*, was the first (and remains the only) monograph-length study devoted to early Latin interpretation of the *Song*. Although she handles the sources in considerably more depth and with greater care than Matter, she nevertheless follows her in many of her conclusions. Henry’s specific interest is the ‘paradox’ that emerges in Latin Christian writings of the late fourth century, in which the *Song of Songs* – a text about carnal love and sexuality – is used to praise virginity. She also believes that exegesis of the *Song* demonstrates the forging of a link between ecclesiological rigorism and ascetic practice. Moreover, she situates the rising prominence of both within the context of the ‘decline’ of the Roman Empire.⁴⁴

Although she has background chapters on the exegesis of the *Song* in early Judaism, Hippolytus, and Origen, the main focus of her research is the writings of Gregory of Elvira, Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome as well as early Latin sacramentaries. Unfortunately, the dissertation is marked by methodological confusion from the outset. In the opening paragraph, she asserts that the early Latin Fathers

Ossius, Protogenes, and perhaps Marcellus) and the Sirmian manifesto (circulated under the names of Ossius and Potamius, but almost certainly drafted by Ursacius, Valens, and Germinius). They are also in the background of much Western anti-Arian literature. See further chapter five.

⁴⁴ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, pp. 1-5.

applied the ‘erotic language’ of the biblical book ‘either to the Christian church or the Christian virgin’.⁴⁵ In so doing, she elides the significant distinction between the application of the *Song* to the *metaphorical* body of the Church and the *physical* bodies of Christian virgins. This leads her to criticize Elizabeth Clark for suggesting that Origen ‘might have been surprised’ by the ascetic readings of Jerome and Ambrose and for ignoring the supposedly ascetic elements in Origen’s *Commentary*. But however much Origen might express ‘disdain for the body’⁴⁶ and expound on the spotless purity of the church, Henry can only produce one passing reference in praise of actual female virgins.⁴⁷ Contrast this with Jerome’s *Epistula ad Eustochium*, in which he frequently draws upon the language of the *Song* to construct the idealized female body, or, in Cox Miller’s parlance, ‘the metaphorical [female virgin] body’.⁴⁸ A fundamentally different logic is at work, which requires more explanation than Henry provides.

This elision between virgin Church and Christian virgins renders her account of Gregory’s *Tractatus* problematic. She argues that, for Gregory, Christ’s virginity serves as the source of the Church’s virginity, which provides the pattern for Christian virgins, and she concludes that ‘faith is associated with renunciation of the world, including sexuality’.⁴⁹ There is, however, only one reference in the work to Christ’s virginity (*Cant.* 2.38) and very few references to physical chastity. Gregory does occasionally use sexual metaphors to describe the union of Word and flesh in the Incarnation, but as I shall demonstrate in chapter five, so did Tertullian and Novatian. Aside from a broad concern for moral and doctrinal purity, Henry is not able to show any actual links between the deeply ecclesiological exegesis that Gregory proffers and that which is found in the writings of Ambrose and Jerome.

Henry also follows Matter’s reading of the *Tractatus* in two key ways. First, she argues that Gregory’s commentary is ‘to be placed in this context of renewed interest [in Origen]’ in the late fourth century and that his work shows ‘familiarity with the writings

⁴⁵ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginité*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginité*, p. 38.

⁴⁷ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.7; Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginité*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ P. Cox Miller, ‘Blazing Body’, p. 27.

⁴⁹ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginité*, p. 85.

of Origen'.⁵⁰ She also asserts that Gregory's closeness to Lucifer of Cagliari influenced his ecclesiological rigorism and that 'his attachment to the Nicene creed clearly appears in the *TE*'.⁵¹ Unfortunately, Henry does not provide any specific references to support her assertion of this clear attachment. Gregory's *Tractatus* is thus the product of a staunchly pro-Nicene Origenist, who is preaching moral and doctrinal rigorism with the Barbarians banging on the door.

This rather persistent narrative has developed, however, in the absence of systematic and detailed studies of early Latin interpretation of the *Song*, the sources of Gregory's exegesis, his hermeneutical method, and his theological commitments. The present study seeks to redress these lacunae by placing the *Tractatus* in its wider exegetical, theological, and historical context(s).

⁵⁰ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 2. No references are given to support this claim.

⁵¹ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 71.

PART ONE

VOX ECCLESIAE: THE EARLY LATIN TRADITION OF SONG EXEGESIS

The task of the first part of the dissertation is an analysis of the use and interpretation of the *Song of Songs* in early Latin Christian communities to 380 CE, in order to establish the exegetical context in which Gregory composed his *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. This period is much neglected in the study of the history of interpretation of the *Song*, with the neo-platonically inspired sermons of Ambrose and the ascetic letters of Jerome from the 380s serving as the earliest points of analysis; Gregory's *Tractatus*, as noted in the Introduction, is frequently dated to this period and interpreted in the light of the hermeneutical shifts that occurred in the 380s, brought about by the translations of Origen and other Greek Fathers.¹ Where hypotheses are ventured regarding the nature of early Latin exegesis of the *Song*, it is the 'affective-mystical' character of the text that is emphasized.² Ambrose and Jerome (and later Apponius and Gregory the Great) are thus perceived to be standing in line with this silent tradition, with Gregory innovating

¹ Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, p. 27, makes mention of the lost commentaries of Victorinus and Reticus, but devotes a scant half-page to them. Clark, 'Uses', pp. 399-410 and Matter, *Voice*, pp. 36-37 both pass directly from Origen to Gregory, Jerome, and Ambrose. Matter's omission of the lost commentaries, particularly that of Victorinus, is interesting, for she is interested in listing Latin commentators directly influenced by Origen, and Victorinus is more certainly in this category than Gregory of Elvira. Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, begins in the late fourth century, without considering the strong influence of Cyprian's ecclesiological exegesis on Gregory of Elvira and Augustine.

² This is based upon the assumption that the Song of Songs was, universally and from earliest times, recited as part of the baptismal liturgy, relating the marriage of Christ and the individual soul. J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1956), p. 192, asserts, 'There is, then, a certain foundation for the interpretation of the Canticle, which is a prophecy of the eschatological marriage, as being a figure of Christian initiation, the feast of the wedding of Christ and the soul'. He relies, however, exclusively upon the Greek catechetical literature and the mystagogical homilies of Ambrose. His sole Latin example before Ambrose is Tertullian (*ibid.*), who in the *De anima* treats baptism as the marriage of the soul and the Spirit (41.4). But Tertullian does not use the Song to articulate this union either in the *De anima* or the *De baptismo*. Cyprian, as we shall see, used the Song to argue for the exclusive unity of the church, but he never cited the text in his articulation of a nuptial theology. Moreover, Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose* (New York: Routledge), p. 145, claims, 'In Ambrose's day the Song of Songs was probably the pre-eminent mystical book of the Old Testament, seen as describing allegorically, in the language of human love, the possibilities of an intimate relationship with Christ'.

by deliberately omitting the personal, affective dimension in his reading of the text, privileging instead the rigorist vision of the church that he discerns therein.³

Although the traces of earlier exegesis are faint, with the earliest two commentaries no longer extant, they are yet discernible and reveal a starkly different picture from the one hitherto supposed. Passages from the *Song* are cited by a number of Latin theologians beginning in the middle of the third century, and in each instance they are taken to refer strictly to the church, often to demonstrate the firmness of its boundaries against the claims of ‘heretical’ and ‘schismatic’ outsiders. The slight remains of the commentaries, moreover, suggest a purely ecclesiological approach to the text.

Latin exegesis of the *Song of Songs* begins with Cyprian of Carthage. He used *Song* 4:12-15 and 6:8 as key proof texts in the rebaptism controversy (c. 254-256 CE) to argue against the efficacy of heretical and schismatic baptism. Unlike his contemporary Origen, who praised the *Song* as the highest point on the ascent to the vision of God and who laboured to plumb its depths,⁴ Cyprian treated the meanings of individual verses as transparent. Not only does Cyprian eschew any ‘personal’ or ‘psychological’ reading of the *Song*, he does not even bring it into the ambit of his nuptial theology. He views the church as a fertile mother begetting sons to God, but he never brings the *Song* into this discourse. It is the ‘non-sexual’ images of the poem – the dove, the garden, and the font – that capture his interest. His interpretation of the *Song* strongly influences Latin theologians throughout the following century.

It is, of course, in his native North Africa that his reception can be traced more clearly, as the key texts he first adduced were fought over by Donatists and Catholics. Our earliest extant glimpse of conflict over the proper interpretation of the *Song* was an exchange of treatises between Parmenian and Optatus in the 360s, but Augustine still had the authority of Cyprian to contend with when he composed the *De baptismo* in 400. In northern Spain in the late fourth century, Pacian, the bishop of Barcelona, and

³ Matter, *Voice*, p. 87, confidently argues, ‘Gregory shows the first stage of development from the Latin translations of Origen on the Song of Songs, for his commentary is original in scope and structure and in its overall purpose: polemic against heretics’.

⁴ Origen, *Comm. In Cant.* prol.

Simpronian the Novatian debated the proper interpretation of *Song* 4:12-15 and 6:8 in an epistolary exchange. Moreover, Tyconius the lay Donatist, in his *Liber Regularum*, which he composed around 380, adduces a different series of texts from the *Song* – *Song* 1:5 and 1:7 – to argue that the church is a mixed community, with a hidden evil element.

There were, as noted above, two commentaries composed during our period as well, by Victorinus of Poetovio (c. late third century) and Reticus of Autun (c. early fourth century). The commentary of Victorinus is entirely lost, and only one fragment from a twelfth-century text and a reference by Jerome remain of Reticus' work. For our purposes, Victorinus' commentary is particularly interesting. He was fluent in Greek as well as Latin and, according to Jerome, knew the works of Origen and Hippolytus well. His only extant biblical commentary, the *In Apocalypsin*, bears out Jerome's claim that he knew Origen, but his typological exegesis of the *Apocalypse* pertains only to Christ and the Church, and nothing pertains to the individual soul. We may surmise, as I shall argue, that he incorporated elements from Origen's (and Hippolytus') ecclesiological exegesis into his *Commentary on the Song*, but nothing of his psychological exegesis. Origen thus entered into the Latin tradition at an early stage, but it was not until Ambrose and Rufinus that his affective-mystical reading became accessible to Latin theologians. We know far less about Reticus' sources, but from Jerome's comment about his work, we can discern that his reading, too, pertained to the church and its founding.

There is thus no extant evidence to substantiate the claim that the *Song* was in the West in Ambrose's day, as Boniface Ramsey claims, 'the pre-eminent mystical book of the Old Testament'.⁵ There appears, rather, to have been a deeply rooted tradition of reading the *Song* ecclesologically, as disclosing the boundaries of the church and describing the nature of the community that lies within. The *Song* was used to support the unity and purity of the church, but does not seem to have been applied to the spiritual journey of the individual soul or the bodies of consecrated virginis. It will be important carefully to trace out these themes in early Latin writers, because they occupy a prominent place in Gregory's *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, as I shall demonstrate in the

⁵ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, p. 145.

concluding chapter of the dissertation. Rather than represent a deviation from or narrowing of earlier tradition, Gregory will be shown to stand squarely within it. Indeed, Gregory's commentary, I shall argue, is the most full and complete expression that remains of the earliest Latin tradition of *Song* exegesis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EARLIEST EVIDENCE: CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE AND THE EARLY COMMENTARIES

I. CYPRIAN

1. Cyprian and the Rebaptism Controversy

Thascius Caecilianus Cyprianus ascended to the episcopal chair of Carthage – the principal see in Proconsular Africa – around the year 248, in the dwindling days of relative peace before North African Christianity would enter a half-century of intermittent, yet severe, persecution, leading to schism and turmoil. His election was not, however, without intrigue. Pontius, author of the *Vita Cypriani*, writes that although Cyprian had the overwhelming support of the people of Carthage, ‘some men’, that is five of the Carthaginian presbyters, strongly resisted his appointment.¹ In spite of the fact that Cyprian was a member of the aristocracy and had received a classical education,² this resistance is understandable, since we read that he was raised *ad officium sacerdotis et episcopatus gradum* whilst still a *neophytus* and *novellus*, an affront to the serving presbyters and in seeming contradiction with the command of *1 Tim* 3:6.³ For Pontius, however, Cyprian was a unique exception: ‘He began with a faith as mature as perhaps a few have had at the end’.⁴

This contested election would portend the strife and division in the days ahead. In little more than a year, the Emperor Decius would issue an edict requiring all citizens of the Empire to pay homage to the gods, with the punishment for non-compliance being

¹ *Vita Cyp.* 5 (PL 3:1485B-C): *Obsederat fores domus copiosa fraternitas, et per omnes aditus sollicita charitas circuibat... Quidam illi restiterunt etiam ut vinceret.* That the *quidam* refer to Carthaginian presbyters is confirmed by Cyprian in *ep.* 43.1.2, in which he speaks of the ‘spite and perfidy of certain presbyters [*quorundam presbyterorum malignitas et perfidia*]’ (CCSL 3B, pp. 200-1).

² *Vita Cyp.* 2.

³ *Vita Cyp.* 3,5.

⁴ *Vita Cyp.* 3: *tam matura coepit fide, quanta pauci fortasse perfecerunt* (PL 3:1484C).

exile, confiscation of property, torture and/or capital punishment.⁵ The bishops, as the leaders of the church, were the first to be targeted. Fabian, the bishop of Rome, was arrested and died in prison;⁶ Babylas, the bishop of Antioch, was targeted soon thereafter.⁷ Cyprian, however, withdrew voluntarily from Carthage, a move he would later defend to the Roman clergy.⁸ Although he was continually writing letters on matters of church discipline and even appointed a presbyter, Numidicus the confessor,⁹ whilst in exile, Cyprian's authority was vulnerable. He followed the practice of the Roman church in requiring an extended period of penance for the lapsed, even those in possession of letters from the martyrs, whom he would not readmit to communion until the peace had been restored. In this matter, he received the constant support of the presbyters Virtius, Rogatianus, and Numidicus, but the other five seem to have thrown their support behind Felicissimus, who, against the tradition of the church, advocated the immediate restoration of those lapsed who had obtained the intercession of the martyrs.¹⁰

In the spring of 251, the edict was no longer being enforced and Cyprian returned to the city.¹¹ In an attempt to reclaim his authority, he rebuked the schismatics, and he confirmed the need for extended penance for the lapsed, both certified and sacrificers. These deep divisions in the Carthaginian church were the impetus for his writing the *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* and the *De Lapsis*, which he completed in exile before the spring council of 251.¹² In the *De Unitate*, as he had in his prior correspondence,¹³ he gave an account which located the unity of the church in the submission of its members to the authority of the one bishop – an office which gains its dignity and power from

⁵ The Decian persecution and its aftermath in Carthage receives excellent treatment in M.M. Sage, *Cyprian* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), pp. 165-265. The edict requiring sacrifice was issued in December 249 (*ibid.*, p. 174). On the types of punishment – *relegatio*, *confiscatio*, *poena capitalis* – see *ibid.*, pp. 184-6.

⁶ Eusebius, *HE* 6.39.1. He died on either January 20th or 21st (see Sage, *Cyprian*, p. 178).

⁷ Eusebius, *HE* 6.39.4.

⁸ *Ep.* 20.1.2.

⁹ *Ep.* 40.1.1.

¹⁰ *Ep.* 43.3.2: *Eadem nunc ratio, eadem rursus eversio per quinque presbyteros Felicissimo copulatos ad ruinam salutis inducitur...sed relictis domini sacerdotibus contra evangelicam disciplinam nova traditio sacrilegae institutionis exurgat* (CCSL 3B, p. 203).

¹¹ Sage, *Cyprian*, p. 231 for the date of Cyprian's return.

¹² Sage, *Cyprian*, pp. 231-2.

¹³ *Epp.* 33.1.1-2; 43.5.2.

Christ's selection of Peter as the *one* to whom he entrusted his rule on earth (cf. *Matt* 16:18-19).¹⁴ This would remain a central theme in Cyprian's writings through to the controversy in 254-256 over the rebaptism of schismatics.

At the spring council of 251, he gained the support of the bishops of Africa, and the five presbyters who conspired against him in his absence were formally excommunicated.¹⁵ Moreover, a decision was reached regarding penitential discipline, according to which a distinction was made between the certified, who were re-admitted to communion, and the sacrificers, who had to continue in their penance.¹⁶ A number of African clergy remained unsatisfied, however, with the continuing rigour imposed upon the lapsed. Chief among them was Privatus, deposed bishop of Lambaesis in Numidia. More problems were posed by the contested election of Cornelius as bishop of Rome; he was opposed by the presbyter Novatian, who established his own rival communion in Rome.¹⁷ In contrast to Privatus, who thought the church too strict, Novatian was concerned that the church was not being strict enough in allowing for the possibility of reconciliation, which he contended would sully the purity of the church.

Between the years 251 and 252 the unity of the church in North Africa continued to dissolve. Bishops questioned Cyprian on his decision to reject communion with Novatian,¹⁸ and Privatus petitioned the college of bishops for recognition.¹⁹ Privatus made his case at the council, which convened on 15 May 252, but was rejected. He then set up his own rival college, and ordained Fortunatus as *pseudoepiscopus* of Carthage. The council also drew up a list 'of the bishops here in Africa who govern the brethren

¹⁴ *Unit.* 4 (CCSL 3, p. 251). In the primacy text (PT), the earlier version of the *De unitate*, datable to 251, Cyprian continues to say, 'Although he gave to all his apostles equal power [*parem potestatem*], nevertheless he established one chair [*unam cathedram*] and by his authority [*sua auctoritate*] arranged [*disposuit*] the origin and logic of unity [*unitatis originem atque rationem*]'.

¹⁵ *Ep.* 59.9.1.

¹⁶ The sacrificers would not be re-admitted to communion until 253, when a new persecution was on the horizon and the North African Church felt the need to strengthen its ranks. See *ep.* 57.1.2.

¹⁷ Sage, *Cyprian*, pp. 248-9, notes that the election of Cornelius was likely something of a surprise, as Novatian seems to have been responsible for maintaining Roman correspondence with other churches and held a strong position among the city's clergy (on Novatian's authorship of the letter of the Roman presbyters and deacons to Cyprian, see *ep.* 55.5.2).

¹⁸ One key example is Antonianus, who, although initially rejecting Novatian in favour of Cornelius, was soon persuaded of Novatian's orthodoxy, and wrote Cyprian to ask for further clarification on why he could not keep communion with Novatian. See *ep.* 55.1.1-2.1.

¹⁹ *Ep.* 59.10.1.

within the catholic church with integrity and soundness of faith'.²⁰ The purpose of the list was to allow Cornelius to know whom to write to and receive letters from.²¹ We can glean from the need for such a list that there were a number of bishops whose loyalty on which Cyprian could not rely.

During this period there were, therefore, three rival bishops of Carthage: Cyprian, the 'catholic'; Maximus, the 'Novatianist'; and Fortunatus, the 'laxist'. Over the period of the next few years, both the 'laxist' and Novatianist communions would have the opportunity to catechize and baptize converts. Some of these would later switch their allegiance to another communion, posing a distinct problem as to how they ought to be assimilated. Cyprian and his colleagues were soon confronted with the question as to whether they must rebaptize schismatics or whether the simple imposition of hands, for the conferring of the Holy Spirit, would suffice. In c. 230, Agrippinus, then bishop of Carthage, convened a council, which pronounced that all heretical converts were in need of rebaptism.²² The need, however, to re-visit the issue in the spring councils of 255 and 256 suggests that the ruling of the council of 230 on heretical baptism was either unknown to many African bishops or seemed inadequate to deal with the nuances of the present conflict. Indeed, the competing communions differed only on disciplinary matters. If they followed the same rites, invoking the triune formula or name of Christ, interrogating the candidates with the same questions, was not the baptism effective?²³

Cyprian's answer to this question was a resounding 'no'. No matter how similar the rite, the only efficacious baptism is that performed *within* the one church under the authority of the bishop, who alone can impart to the waters the cleansing and sanctifying

²⁰ *Ep.* 59.9.3.

²¹ *Ep.* 59.9.3.

²² *Ep.* 70.1.2; 73.3.1. For the dating of the council, see G.W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian Vol. 4* (ACW 47; New York: Newman Press, 1989), pp. 196-199. The bishops were drawn both from Proconsular Africa and Numidia and, according to Augustine, were seventy in number: *de septuaginta praecessoribus Cypriani* (*De unico bapt.* 13.22; CSEL 53.21). The number is not unreasonable, considering Cyprian was able to assemble 71 bishops for the spring council of 256 (cf. *ep.* 73.1.2).

²³ *Ep.* 69.7.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 480): *Quod si aliquis illud opponit ut dicat eandem Novatianum legem tenere quam catholica ecclesia tenet; ep.* 73.16.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 547): *aliquis ad circumueniendam christianam veritatem Christi nomen opponat ut dicat: in nomine Iesu Christi ubicumque et quomodocumque baptizati gratiam baptismi sunt consecuti.*

presence of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ His doctrine of baptism hinges entirely upon his understanding of the exclusive unity of the church, which is made visible in the person and office of the bishop. Cyprian articulates and develops his arguments in favour of rebaptism in a series of epistles to various correspondents in Africa, Rome, and Caesarean Cappadocia (*epp.* 69-75), which are datable to the years 254-256; some of these come from his pen alone, whilst two (*epp.* 70 and 72) are written on behalf of his North African colleagues who were present at the spring councils of 255 and 256. One surviving letter (*ep.* 75) is actually a response from Firmilian, bishop of Caesarean Cappadocia, which recapitulates and, in some places, further develops Cyprian's arguments.

It is during this controversy over rebaptism that the *Song of Songs* becomes an important resource for Cyprian. He draws, in particular, upon two images: the church as a single, perfect dove, taken from *Song* 6:8, which discloses its purity and its oneness;²⁵ and the church as an enclosed garden, in which fruit trees blossom and through which vivifying waters flow, taken from *Song* 4:12-15, which signifies that the waters of baptism are available only to those within its confines.²⁶ In his citations of the latter text, he omits vv. 13-14 to link directly the *fons signatus* with the *puteus aquae vivae* to bring out the baptismal imagery; in *ep.* 74.11.2, he re-inserts a portion of v. 13 – *paradisus cum fructu pomorum* – at the end of his citation to demonstrate the fertility of the church, a point, I shall argue, that becomes important to him only in the latter stages of the controversy.

Cyprian in the *Song of Songs* found strong scriptural justification for his assertion that the vivifying waters of baptism were the sole property of the one true church. It is far from the most cited text in the controversy, but its striking imagery made it prominent. In his first (extant) word on the matter, *ep.* 69 to Magnus, *Song* 6:8

²⁴ *Ep.* 70.1.3 (CCSL 3C, p. 503): *Oportet vero mundari et sanctificari aquam prius a sacerdote.*

²⁵ Cited in full in *ep.* 69.2.1 and also in the Textus Receptus of *De unitate* 4.

²⁶ Cyprian cites this passage twice – *ep.* 69.2.1 and 74.11.2 – both times deliberately omitting and rearranging portions. 69.2.1: (4:12) *hortus conclusus, soror mea, sponsa, fons signatus*, (15) *puteus aquae vivae*; 74.11.2: (4:12) *hortus conclusus, soror mea, sponsa, fons signatus*, (15) *puteus aquae vivae*, (13) *paradisus cum fructu pomorum*. Moreover, in his letter to Cyprian (*ep.* 75.15.1), Firmilian praises the bishop's use of *Song* 4:12-15 to demonstrate the impossibility of gaining access to the 'living waters that cleanse and save' outside of the Church.

and 4:12-15, beautifully woven together, are the first texts he employs in articulating his doctrine of baptism. Moreover, in the last letter that survives from his pen on the rebaptism controversy, *ep. 74* to Pompeius, he writes that the *sacramentum unitatis* is expressed in the *Song*, and he again cites from 4:12-15 to show that those outside the bounds of the true church cannot enter into or drink from [*introire aut bibere*] the baptismal font.²⁷

The *Song of Songs* also figures prominently in his revision of *De unit. 4-5*, known as the *Textus Receptus*, which most likely dates to the summer of 256, when the rebaptism controversy was reaching a fevered pitch.²⁸ In the face of dissenting opinion, Cyprian revised his *De unitate* to stress the need for the bishops to cling to the unity of the church and to ‘show also that the episcopate itself is one and undivided’.²⁹ It is in this fragmenting of episcopal unity that Cyprian turns to the *Song of Songs* for an image of the one, perfect Church: ‘That the church is one the Holy Spirit signifies in the *Song of Songs*, in the person of the Lord, and says: *One is my dove, my perfect one: she is one to her mother, the chosen one from her womb* (Cat 6:8)’.³⁰

2. The Place of the Song of Songs in Cyprian’s Rebaptism Writings

We may now turn to an analysis of his use of this biblical text. First, however, it bears mentioning that although Cyprian does use nuptial imagery as a means of disclosing the

²⁷ *Ep. 74.11.2* (CCL 3C, p. 578).

²⁸ D. Van den Eyde, ‘La double édition du “De Unitate” de S. Cyprien’ *RHE* 29 (1933), pp. 5–24, was the first to link the TR with the rebaptism controversy, noting that the scriptural texts cited in the revision figured prominently in *epp. 69, 73, and 74*. M. Bévenot, *Cyprian: De Lapsis and De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. xi–xv, argues for a specific dating of 256, claiming that Cyprian revised it after his row with Stephen, since his use of the term *cathedra Petri* and *primatus Petro datur* were being taken in a ‘papalist’ sense at Rome. Recently, S.G. Hall, ‘The Versions of Cyprian’s *De Unitate* 4-5. Bévenot’s Dating Revisted’ *JTS* 54/1 (2004), pp. 138–46, has posited instead the date of 252. He claims that it is mere speculation to suggest Cyprian’s words were being taken in a ‘papalist’ sense, and that it is even more problematic since Bévenot argued so forcefully that the term *primatus* does not at all have the modern sense of papal primacy. Instead, he suggests it was revised for the council of 252 in the face of fracturing episcopal unity in North Africa. I agree with his critique of Bévenot’s justification for a date of 256, but in my view the internal evidence suggests it is connected with the rebaptism controversy. See K. Shuve, ‘Cyprian of Carthage’s Writings from the Rebaptism Controversy: Two Revisionary Proposals Reconsidered’ *JTS* 61/2 (2010), pp. 627–43.

²⁹ *Unit. 5* (CCSL 3C, p. 252): *ut episcopatum quoque ipsum unum atque indivisum probemus*.

³⁰ *Unit. 4*.

relationship between Christ and the church, he does not use the *Song of Songs* as part of this discourse. The key example of this is 2.19 of the *Ad Quirinum*, also known as the *Testimonia Adversus Iudaeos*, in which he provides scriptural testimonies demonstrating ‘that Christ is the bridegroom, having the church as his bride, from which sons are born spiritually’.³¹ The *Song of Songs* is missing from the list of Old Testament references, two of which are drawn from the prophets and one from the Psalms (*Joel* 2:15-16; *Jer* 16:9; *Ps* 19:5-6). Similarly, in *ep.* 74 to Pompeius, Cyprian argues against the efficacy of heretical and schismatic baptism by appealing to the language of generation. He argues, ‘Since, however, the birth of Christians is in baptism, the generation and sanctification of baptism is available only to the one bride of Christ, who is able spiritually to bear and beget children to God. Therefore, where and from whom and to whom is born a son who is not of the church?’³² Cyprian again does not use the *Song* to strengthen his identification of the Church with a bride and mother. Firmilian, interestingly, seems troubled by Cyprian’s lack of scriptural justification for his understanding of baptism as the spiritual bearing of children by mother church, and provides him with four references – two of them from the *Song* (4:8 and 5:1).³³ Firmilian uses these texts, moreover, to adduce the further point that ‘we see one person placed before us, because there is one bride’.³⁴ Even when pressed into the service of articulating a nuptial theology, the *Song* still remains a text that primarily discloses the unity of the church. Since, however, this is the last extant letter from the period of the controversy, we cannot say whether it influenced Cyprian in his use of the *Song*.

It is also notable that Cyprian always assigns his citations of the *Song* to a particular *persona* – either Christ or the church. From Cyprian’s use of a consistent formula to introduce quotations from the *Song*, we can deduce that he is dependent upon a received exegetical tradition, in which the *Song* is understood as a dialogue between

³¹ *Quir.* 2.19 (CCSL 3, p. 55): *Quod ipse sit sponsus ecclesiam habens sponsam, de qua filii spiritaliter nascerentur.*

³² *Ep.* 74.7.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 572): *Cum autem nativitas christianorum in baptismo sit, baptismi autem generatio et sanctificatio apud solam sponsam Christi sit, quae parere spiritaliter et generare filios deo possit, ubi et ex qua et cui natus est qui filius ecclesiae non est?*

³³ *Ep.* 75.14.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 594). The other two texts are *2 Cor* 11:2 and *Ps* 44:11-12.

³⁴ *Ep.* 75.14.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 594): *Videmus unam personam ubique proponi, quia et sponsa est una.*

Christ and the church; there seems to be no awareness of a ‘personal’ or ‘psychological’ interpretation, which identifies the Bride with the soul. Indeed, one would have expected precisely such an interpretation in Cyprian’s first citation of the poem, which is also its only occurrence outside of the rebaptism controversy. Near the end of the *De dominica oratione*, Cyprian chastises his readers for failing to be mindful in prayer, saying, ‘When you pray to God...you keep watch with your eyes and sleep with your heart, when a Christian ought even when he sleeps with his eyes to keep watch with his heart’.³⁵ He then cites *Song* 5:2, introducing it in the following way: ‘*sicut scriptum est ex persona ecclesiae loquentis in Cantico canticorum: Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*’.³⁶ Referring this verse to the disposition of the individual Christian’s heart, one might have expected Cyprian to introduce it *ex persona animae*. But, for Cyprian, the *Song* speaks only in the voices of Christ and his church, and he gives a ‘psychological’ interpretation only in the sense that the actions of the corporate church provide the pattern for the life of the individual Christian. And the *De dominica oratione* is as close as Cyprian will ever come to offering a ‘psychological’ reading of the *Song*; his interpretation of the text in the rebaptism controversy cannot be applied to the individual Christian, since he uses it to inscribe the boundaries of the church, outside of which salvation, sanctification, and communion are not possible.

(a) *Epistula* 69 ‘To Magnus’

The first piece of correspondence to come down to us from the rebaptism controversy is the letter to Magnus (*ep.* 69).³⁷ From Cyprian’s response, we can surmise that Magnus wrote to him with two pressing questions concerning baptism: first, are those baptized in Novatian’s communion to be classed with other heretics and therefore in need of rebaptism (69.1.1); secondly, do those who, due to serious ill-health, are sprinkled with water receive the full grace of baptism (69.12.1). Although the second question does not

³⁵ *Orat.* 31 (CCSL 3A, p. 109): *quando oras Deum...hoc est vigilare oculis et corde dormire, cum debeat christianus et cum dormit oculis corde vigilare.*

³⁶ *Orat.* 31 (CCSL 3A, p. 109).

³⁷ On the date of the epistle, see Shuve, ‘Rebaptism Controversy’, pp. 630-8.

directly concern us here, it bears mentioning, since it demonstrates that the rebaptism of schismatics was at first classed as one problem among several concerning ritual practice.

Magnus here bears witness to the North African custom of rebaptizing heretics. He simply assumes that this is the accepted practice, and Cyprian does not think it necessary to emphasize the point. The question, however, is whether those who come over from Novatian fall into this category and are in need of the ‘legitimate, true, and one baptism of the Church’.³⁸ It is not surprising that Cyprian does not invoke the judgment of Agrippinus’ council as he does elsewhere; Magnus is not contesting the practice of rebaptism, but is instead asking whether any exceptions can be made, presumably on the grounds of Novatian’s strict orthodoxy.³⁹ Essentially, Magnus’ question boils down to whether one can make a distinction between heresy and schism. Whilst the conciliar judgment of 230 does not seem to make a clear case, Cyprian is convinced that scripture [*scripturarum divinarum sanctitas ac veritas*] does: ‘We say that all heretics and schismatics are entirely without power or right’.⁴⁰ Magnus links rebaptism with the *haereticos*; Cyprian, notably, adds to this *et schismaticos*, a pairing that occurs with frequency throughout the rest of the controversy.⁴¹ He concludes forcefully, ‘Novatian ought not to be and cannot be excepted [*nec debet nec potest excipi*], since he too stands outside the church [*extra ecclesiam consistens*] and strives against the peace and love of Christ; he is counted among the adversaries and antichrists [*inter adversarios et antichristos computetur*’].⁴² The sole criterion for Cyprian is whether one is inside or outside of the church. Novatian cannot be inside the church, because he has set himself up as bishop of Rome, when Cornelius already had ‘succeeded bishop Fabian by lawful ordination’.⁴³ Cyprian then proceeds to list several

³⁸ Ep. 69.1.1 (CCSL 3C:469): ‘*an inter ceteros haereticos eos quoque qui a Novatiano veniant post profanum eius lavacrum baptizari et sanctificari in ecclesia catholica legitimo et vero et unico ecclesiae baptismo oporteat*’.

³⁹ We can surmise that this is the justification for the exception on the basis of ep. 69.7.1.

⁴⁰ Ep. 69.1.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 470): ‘*dicimus omnes omnino haereticos et schismaticos nihil habere potestatis ac iuris*’. On the use of *haeretici* and *schismatici*, see G.D. Dunn, ‘Heresy and Schism According to Cyprian of Carthage’ *JTS* 55/2 (2004), pp. 551-74, esp pp. 573-4.

⁴¹ Epp. 70.1.1; 71.1.1; 72.1.2. It is notable, however, that in epp. 73 and 74, however, Cyprian himself elides this distinction and speaks again of only *haereticos*.

⁴² Ep. 69.1.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 470).

⁴³ Ep. 69.3.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 474): *Fabiano episcopo legitima ordinatione successit*.

New Testament passages that demonstrate the fundamental principle that ‘every single one who was not with him were his enemies’.⁴⁴ There is no distinction between any heresy or schism, nor is there any group for which an exception can be made.

Cyprian’s entire argument against the validity of Novatianist baptism hinges on the oneness of the church – that it is indivisible, inseparable, and belongs only to those in proper apostolic succession.⁴⁵ The three New Testament citations serve only to set the stage for a series of ‘proof texts’, which demonstrate this inviolable unity. The first of these, significantly, is a hybrid quotation of *Song* 6:8 and 4:12-15. He introduces the citation in a similar manner to *De dominica oratione* 31: ‘*Quod autem ecclesia una sit declarat in cantico canticorum spiritus sanctus ex persona Christi dicens.*’ Again, Cyprian states the source of the reference and assigns the words to a particular *persona* – here, it is Christ. It is not Christ directly speaking, but the Holy Spirit speaking *ex persona Christi*. This phrase, I would argue, discloses a fairly nuanced understanding of the *Song*, which is in keeping with Cyprian’s doctrine of inspiration: Christ and the church are characters [*personae*] in a figural dialogue inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ He then cites the *Song* itself: ‘*una est columba mea, perfecta mea, una est matri suae, electa genetrici suae. De qua item denuo dicit: hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa, fons signatus, puteus aquae vivae*’.⁴⁷ The citation of *Song* 6:8 is straightforward, but Cyprian in his citation of *Song* 4:12-15 has omitted vv. 13-14. We may surmise that he wished to link *fons signatus* with *puteus aquae vivae* to make clear that the sealed font contains the life-giving waters of baptism. This is confirmed in the brief commentary that he offers

⁴⁴ *Ep.* 69.1.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 470): ‘*omnes omnino qui secum non essent...adversarios suos esse*’. The citations are as follows: *Matt* 12:30/*Luke* 11:23; *1 John* 2:18-19; *Matt* 18:17.

⁴⁵ This is the conclusion he draws in *ep.* 69.4.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 474): *Foris enim non esse ecclesiam nec scindi adversum se aut divide posse, sed inseparabilis atque individuae domus unitatem tenere.*

⁴⁶ According to M.A. Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1971), pp. 44-45, Cyprian understands the authors of scripture to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, although he rarely uses the term *inspiratio*. More common is the assertion that an ‘author was “constitutus” by the Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit speaks through a human author.’ There is only one instance outside of his citations of the *Song* that Cyprian uses the *ex persona* formula to link the Spirit and a person of the Trinity. In *ep.* 63.4.1, he writes ‘*spiritus sanctus ex persona patris ad filium dicens*’ (CCSL 3C, p. 392). Fahey, however, incorrectly states that Cyprian asserts that the Holy Spirit is speaking *ex persona ecclesiae* in *dom. or.* 31 – the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the introductory formula. We may, though, still presume that the same logic is at work.

⁴⁷ *Ep.* 69.2.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 471-2).

on *Song* 4:12-15, in which he discusses in succession three principal images – *hortus conclusus*, *fons signatus*, *puteus aquae vivae*. First, if the *hortus conclusus* is the bride, then the church is ‘closed-up and not able to be opened up to alien and profane people’. Next, he says that if the fountain is sealed, then those placed outside [*foris positi*] are ‘neither able to drink from it nor be sealed by it’. Finally, ‘if the stream of living water is one, which is inside [*intus*], then the one placed outside [*foris positi*] is able neither to be vivified nor sanctified from that water’.⁴⁸ Cyprian here uses the *Song* to inscribe the boundaries of the church, allowing him to distinguish clearly between those who are *intus*, having access to the vivifying and sanctifying waters, and those who are *foris positi*, alien and profane people who have no means of being redeemed and sanctified. He follows this with citations of *1 Pet* 3:20-21 and *Eph* 5:25-26, both of which confirm that ‘the church is one and only those who are in the church are able to be baptized’.⁴⁹

The end result of this argument is clear. If there is only one church, which is indivisible, and baptism properly belongs only to those firmly within that one church, then to affirm that Novatian’s baptism is valid is to deny the validity of catholic baptism: ‘For the church is one, and she who is one is not able to be both inside and outside. If the church is with Novatian, then she was not with Cornelius’.⁵⁰ One is forced to make a choice between the two, and Cyprian points both to Cornelius’ rightful succession of Fabian as bishop and his martyrdom to confirm in his readers’ minds who indeed possesses the church. Novatian, by contrast, ‘succeeding no one takes his origin from himself’.⁵¹

(b) *Epistula* 73 ‘To Jubaianus’

⁴⁸ *Ep.* 69.2.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 472): *Si autem hortus conclusus est sponsa Christi quae est ecclesia, patere res clausa alienis et profanis non potest. Et si fons signatus est, neque bibere inde neque consignari potest cui foris posito accessus ad fontem non est. Puteus quoque aquae vivae si unus est, idem qui intus est, vivificari et sanctificari foris positus ex illa aqua non potest.*

⁴⁹ *Ep.* 69.2.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 472): *unam ecclesiam esse et solos eos qui in ecclesia sint baptizari posse.*

⁵⁰ *Ep.* 69.3.1-2 (CCSL 3C, pp. 473-4): *Ecclesia enim una est, quae una et intus esse et foris non potest. Si enim apud Novatianum est, apud Cornelium non fuit.*

⁵¹ *Ep.* 69.3.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 474): *nemini succedens a se ipso ortus est.*

The letter to Jubaianus was written following the spring council of 256, which upheld the judgment that *haeretici et schismatici*, without exception, must be rebaptized.

Although there is no citation of the *Song* in this letter, Cyprian does use the image of the church as enclosed garden that is, at least partially, indebted to the *Song*. Jubaianus writes Cyprian with certain questions about this decision, prompted by a letter that he was sent, which he forwarded to the Carthaginian bishop for consideration.⁵² The primary objection – and the one that we can firmly attribute to the anonymous letter – is that the efficacy of baptism does not have to do with the one who administers it, but rather is measured according to the faith of the one receiving the sacrament, *secundum quod credidit*.⁵³ Cyprian is willing, at least momentarily, to entertain this premise: ‘For if we and the heretics have one faith, there is able to be also one grace’.⁵⁴

Using Marcion as a straw man, however, Cyprian demonstrates that heretics – even if they seem to employ the same language to speak of God – do not share the same faith and thus cannot receive the grace of baptism. It is true that the letter to which Cyprian is responding does mention Marcion, but we must sense at least some duplicity on his part. Novatian’s Trinitarian theology is perfectly orthodox, and he certainly means the same thing as the catholics when confessing God as Father and Creator, and Christ as Son, born of Mary and the Word made flesh (cf. *ep.* 73.5.2); on these grounds, Cyprian would have to acknowledge the efficacy of his baptism. This is why Cyprian ultimately returns to the same justification he gave to Magnus, albeit in a more polished form:

For the Lord gave that power first to Peter, upon whom he built the church and whence he instituted and displayed the origin of unity, in order that that might be loosed on earth which he had loosed...From which we understand that only to the rulers in the church and established by the law of the gospel and the ordination of the Lord is it permitted to baptize and to give the remission of sins.⁵⁵

⁵² We do not know who was the author of this letter; nor do we know much about its contents. All we can surmise from Cyprian’s oblique reference to it in *ep.* 73.4.1 is that its author(s) were firmly opposed to rebaptism, even in the case of one coming over from Marcion. Later in the epistle, Cyprian will attribute further objections to *quidam*, ‘certain people’ (e.g., *ep.* 73.9.1). It is unclear whether these objections were also part of this letter, or whether they were simply ‘in the air’ at that time in Carthage and Cyprian wanted to be thorough in his reply.

⁵³ *Ep.* 73.4.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 533).

⁵⁴ *Ep.* 73.4.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 533).

⁵⁵ *Ep.* 73.7.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 537): *Nam Petro primum dominus, super quem aedificavit ecclesiam et unde unitatis originem instituit et ostendit, potestatem istam dedit ut id solueretur in terris quod ille*

In this epistle, Cyprian draws out in more detail the importance of succession, which he first raised in a far more elementary way in *ep.* 69.4.1. The bishop, as successor of the apostles, possesses the power which the Lord first gave to Peter to show the *originem unitatis*. It is one power [*potestas*] distributed without loss or division to all those bishops who were lawfully elected.

Cyprian again turns to the image of a garden, as he had in *ep.* 69.2.1, to establish the unity of the church and the firmness of its boundaries: ‘The church, being a likeness of paradise, has fruit-bearing trees enclosed among her walls...she waters those trees by the four rivers, that is by the four gospels, by which she confers the grace of baptism through a saving, heavenly flood. Is anyone able to drink from the fonts of the church who is not in the church?’⁵⁶ An allusion to *Gen* 2:8-14 has rightly been noted here by Clarke.⁵⁷ The use of *paradisus* (rather than *hortus*) for ‘garden’ and especially the reference to four rivers confirms this. But I think the primary referent here must be the *Song*. On a conceptual level, in his letter to Magnus Cyprian had already used the *Song* to demonstrate that the church is one, that within its walls is enclosed the sealed font of living water, and that this water is not available to those outside the church. There are also notable verbal parallels, however. *Song* 4:13, which Cyprian cites at *ep.* 74.11.2 speaks of a ‘*paradisus cum fructu pomorum*’. We can thus see that the term *paradisus*, as well as an emphasis upon the fecundity of this garden, are suggestive of an allusion to *Song* 4:12-15. Also, Cyprian later replaces *fluminibus* with *fontibus* to speak of the baptismal waters, which points to the language of *Song* 4:12 rather than *Genesis* 2. There are, moreover, several minor verbal changes that nonetheless still evoke *Song* 4:12-15: *includo* instead of *concludo*; *fluuius aquae vitalis* instead of *puteus aquae vivae*.

Cyprian here uses the garden imagery to greater effect than he did in his letter to Magnus. Instead of employing it simply to demonstrate that the baptismal waters are sealed and inaccessible to those outside of the church, Cyprian contrasts the fecundity of

soluisset...Unde intellegimus non nisi in ecclesia praepositis et evangelica lege ac dominica ordinatione fundatis licere baptizare et remissam peccatorum dare....

⁵⁶ *Ep.* 73.10.3 (CCSL 3C, pp. 540-1).

⁵⁷ Clarke, *Cyprian Vol. 4*, p. 228.

the Church with the dryness and barrenness of the heretics, ‘where there is no fountain or stream of life-giving water’.⁵⁸

(c) *Epistula* 74 ‘To Pompeius’

In his letter to Pompeius, Cyprian shifts his discourse concerning the church from the fecund garden to the fertile bride. Faced with Pope Stephen’s judgment that not only is Novatian’s baptism acceptable but so too that of Marcion (cf. *ep.* 74.7.3), Cyprian tries a different tactic to argue for the necessity of rebaptism. In his earlier epistles, he had relied primarily upon a contrast between *intus/foris* – the church is one, and those who are inside are vivified by the baptismal waters, whereas those who are outside have no access. The response to this seems to be that the power of the name of Jesus Christ can overcome this division, bringing renewal and sanctification even outside the church.⁵⁹ Cyprian, however, seizes upon a logical inconsistency: ‘Since, however, the birth of Christians is in baptism [*nativitas christianorum in baptismo sit*], and the generation and sanctification of baptism comes from the sole bride of Christ [*apud solam sponsam Christi sit*], who is able spiritually to bear and give birth to sons of God, where and by what mother and to whom [*ubi et ex qua et cui*] is born a son who is not of the church?’⁶⁰ By using the language of generation to describe baptism, Cyprian hopes to force his opponents either to recant or to make the blasphemous assertion that the Father has two (or more) *sponsae*, for heretics and schismatics cannot claim the church as their mother.

The *Song of Songs*, as I noted above, does not figure into Cyprian’s nuptial theology. He does, however, cite *Song* 4:12-15 at the conclusion of this letter, when he reaffirms that there is only one true church that preserves the one true apostolic tradition. Cyprian uses his usual formula to introduce the quotation: ‘*Cuius unitatis sacramentum expressum videmus etiam in cantico Canticorum ex persona Christi*

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 73.11.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 541): *ubi fons et fluvius aquae vitalis omnino non est.*

⁵⁹ E.g., *ep.* 74.5.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 569): *Aut si effectum baptismi maiestati nominis tribuunt, ut qui in nomine Iesu Christi ubicumque et quomodocumque baptizantur innovati et sanctificati iudicentur, in eiusdem Christi nomine illic et manus baptizato inponitur ad accipiendum spiritum sanctum.*

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 74.7.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 572).

dicens'.⁶¹ The same edited quotation of *Song* 4:12-15 is given, only with the phrase *paradisus cum fructu pomorum* from 4:13 appended to the end. Cyprian may have felt compelled to add those words to highlight the fecundity of the garden, a point to which he had given theological weight in *ep.* 73.10.1. The phrase *sacramentum unitatis* here places another layer of meaning on the *Song*, in addition to disclosing that the baptismal font lies sealed within the walls of the church. In *ep.* 74.8-10, Cyprian chastises his fellow bishops for failing to seek truth and for following a custom that is nothing more than 'error grown old'.⁶² Truth, says Cyprian, can be easily found 'if we turn again to the head and origin of divine tradition'.⁶³ This *traditio* can be summed up as follows, in the language of *Eph* 4:4-6: 'There is one God and one Christ, one hope and one faith, one church and one baptism established only in the one church'. Cyprian's understanding of the significance of the rebaptism issue has shifted. Rejecting this practice no longer means simply that one has a faulty theology of baptism, but, more seriously, that one has deviated from tradition and broken the unity of the Church: 'Whoever departs from this unity must be found in company with heretics'.⁶⁴ The *sacramentum unitatis* which the *Song* discloses is not only an imperative for rebaptism, but a call to unity in doctrine and practice more broadly. Such is, I shall argue below, the reason for Cyprian's citation of the *Song* in the *Textus Receptus*.

(d) *Epistula* 75 'From Firmilian to Cyprian'

We must, however, consider briefly Firmilian's response to Cyprian before turning to the *De Unitate*. There is no extant letter from Cyprian to Firmilian, but Clarke's hypothesis, on the basis of internal evidence, that Cyprian sent a dossier of his previous

⁶¹ *Ep.* 74.11.2 (CCL 3C, p. 578).

⁶² *Ep.* 74.9.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 575): *nam consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est*. That Cyprian is speaking specifically to bishops, see *ep.* 74.10.1: *oportet enim episcopos non tantum docere, sed et discere*; *ep.* 74.10.3 *quod et nunc facere oportet dei sacerdotes praecepta divina servantes*.

⁶³ *Ep.* 74.10.2 (CCSL 3C, p. 577): *nam si ad divinae traditionis caput et originem revertamur*.

⁶⁴ *Ep.* 74.11.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 578): *a qua unitate quisque discesserit cum haereticis necesse est inveniatur*.

correspondence seems likely.⁶⁵ Firmilian writes to support Cyprian in his rejection of Stephen's ruling on the practice of rebaptism, adding that he has committed Cyprian's response to memory [*memoriae*] and will 'add certain points in order that proof might be accumulated'.⁶⁶ He then goes on to repeat a number of Cyprian's arguments. Important for our purposes, however, is his use of nuptial theology. He follows Cyprian in considering the 'regeneration of the second birth'.⁶⁷ Instead of asking rhetorically who is the mother of heretics, as does Cyprian, Firmilian argues that Christ has only one bride who lives in chaste union with him: 'If, however, the bride of Christ, who is the catholic church, is one, it is she alone who bears sons for God'.⁶⁸ Firmilian here adduces four scriptural references which demonstrate that Christ has only one bride: *2 Cor* 11:2; *Ps* 44:11-12; *Song* 4:8 and 5:1. Although he gives no justification why he has selected these four passages specifically, aside from the fact that they each refer to a single woman (*virgo, filia, sponsa*), his citations from the *Song* are significant because Cyprian has not used this text to refer to the church as the fertile mother who begets sons for God – he has elided the theological implications of the term *sponsa*. It is significant, I believe, that Firmilian follows this discourse by turning to Cyprian's point 'that the church, according to the *Song of Songs*, is a garden enclosed and fountain sealed, a garden with fruit of apples'.⁶⁹ He has concretely linked, using the *Song*, two images that were prominent but unconnected in Cyprian's thought: the church as fertile bride and the church as sealed garden.

(e) The *Textus Receptus* of the *De Unitate*

⁶⁵ Clarke, *Cyprian Vol. 4*, pp. 248-9, surmises that at least *epp.* 69, 73, and 74 were sent. Clarke identifies *ep.* 74 as the most important of these, since Firmilian expresses outrage at Pope Stephen's rejection of rebaptism and gives approbation to Cyprian for the persuasiveness of his response (*ep.* 75.7.1).

⁶⁶ *Ep.* 75.4.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 585): *et quaedam addere ad cumulandum probationem*.

⁶⁷ *Ep.* 75.14.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 594): *regenerationem secundae nativitas*.

⁶⁸ *Ep.* 75.14.1 CCSL 3C, p. 594): *Si autem sponsa Christi una est, quae est ecclesia catholica, ipsa est quae sola generat deo filios*.

⁶⁹ *Ep.* 75.15.1 (CCSL 3C, p. 595): *Sed nec illud praetereundum est a nobis quod a vobis necessario dictum est, quod ecclesia secundum canticum canticorum hortus sit conclusus et fons signatus, paradisus cum fructu pomorum*.

Around the time that he was writing his letter to Pompeius – that is, in the summer of 256 – Cyprian was likely also engaged in revising a small portion of the *De unitate*. As Stuart Hall has insightfully noted, in the original version of *De unitate* 4-5, Cyprian identifies the bishop as a shepherd, to whom alone is granted the duty and authority of governing the flock, by following his citation of *Matt* 16:18 with a brief quote from *John* 21:17, *pasce oves meas*. In so doing, Cyprian is surely writing against those in his Carthaginian see who sought to usurp or undermine his position.⁷⁰ He asks, ‘Does the one who does not hold to this unity of Peter believe that he still holds the faith? Does the one who deserts the *cathedram Petri*, upon which the church was established, believe that he is still in the church?’⁷¹ His authority as bishop cannot be undermined, and his decisions are and remain final.

The revised text, rather than focus upon the authority exercised by the one bishop, instead stresses the need for all the bishops to remain bound to the unity from which their authority flows. The citation of *John* 21:17 is replaced with *John* 20:21, in which after his resurrection Christ gives his power equally to all the apostles: *apostolis omnibus post resurrectionem suam parem potestatem tribuat*.⁷² The two images need to be held together, says Cyprian, because although Christ’s *potestas* is spread in equal measure to bishops throughout the world, it was given first to Peter alone ‘in order that [Christ] might make manifest its unity [*ut unitatem manifestaret*]’.⁷³ The interrogation, moreover, has subtly changed as well. It is no longer *hanc Petri unitatem qui non tenet*, but *hanc ecclesiae unitatem qui non tenet*; and no longer *qui cathedram Petri...deserit*, but *qui ecclesiae renititur et resistit*. In both instances, *Petrus* has changed to *ecclesia*.

⁷⁰ Hall, ‘De Unitate’, pp. 142-3, adds ‘Shepherding, however, in ancient times is not an Arcadian or woolly notion, but signifies government and punishment. Kings are shepherds: not only David (Ps. 78/77:71–2, etc.), but Agamemnon (Iliad 2.243, etc.); the Lord’s Anointed ‘herds’ the heathen with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 12:5, etc.). The shepherd’s rod is a tool of judgement. Thus when the notion of ‘one chair’ is repeatedly emphasized...is the role of the bishop as judge and arbiter that is in question: others share and exercise his authority, but the decision, about the lapsed in particular, rests with him.’

⁷¹ *Unit.* 4 (PT) (CCSL 3, p. 252): *Hanc Petri unitatem qui non tenet, tenere se fidem credit? Qui cathedram Petri, super quem fundata ecclesia est, deserit, in ecclesia se esse confidit*. By *cathedram Petri*, Cyprian cannot here mean the Roman see, but is referring to the episcopal chair which he himself occupies in Carthage, the dignity and authority of which derive from the initial founding of a single Chair belonging to Peter. See Bévenot, *Cyprian*, 63, n.5.

⁷² *Unit.* 4 (TR) (CCSL 3, p. 251).

⁷³ *Unit.* 4 (TR) (CCSL 3, p. 251).

Instead of addressing those who do not follow the bishop, Cyprian chastises those who rend the unity of the church. And instead of suggesting that his readers have departed from the sphere of the bishop's authority, he is speaking to those who strive against the church whilst (ostensibly) remaining a part of it. He concludes with an exhortation directly to bishops: 'We ought firmly to hold to and to defend this unity, especially we bishops who preside in the church, in order that we might show that the episcopacy itself is one and undivided too'.⁷⁴

Cyprian uses two biblical texts to make manifest this unity of the church – *Song* 6:8 and *Eph* 4:4-6. He introduces his citation from the *Song* as follows: '*Quam unam ecclesiam etiam in Cantico Canticorum Spiritus sanctus ex persona Domini designat*'.⁷⁵ Again, he highlights that it is the Holy Spirit speaking through the *persona* of Christ, whom he here refers to as *dominus*. Cyprian's use of the *Song* in the *Textus Receptus* is very similar to what we find in the letter to Pompeius, although there it was *Song* 4:12-15 rather than *Song* 6:8 that he employed. In both instances, he is responding to the problem of bishops who are cutting themselves off from the source [*origo*] of their episcopal authority, and in so doing are fracturing the unity of the church.⁷⁶ The *Song* discloses not only the boundaries of the church, outside of which salvation is not possible, but grounds Cyprian's account of the church as a body unified in doctrine and practice. The laity, deacons, and presbyters cannot desert their bishop and remain in the Church, but the bishops must be bound together in fidelity to the source of their episcopal authority.

3. Conclusions

Cyprian invokes the *Song of Songs* in both his first and last (extant) writings on the rebaptism controversy – the letter to Magnus and the *Textus Receptus* of the *De unitate*. Although these texts are separated by only two years, or perhaps even less, we can detect

⁷⁴ *Unit.* 5 (TR) (CCSL 3, p. 252): *Quam unitatem tenere firmiter et vindicare debemus maxime episcopi, qui in ecclesia praesidemus, ut episcopatum quoque ipsum unum adque indivisum probemus.*

⁷⁵ *Unit.* 4 (TR) (CCSL 3, p. 252).

⁷⁶ For a more detailed comparison, see Shuve, 'Rebaptism Controversy', pp. 642-3.

an important shift in his use of the *Song*. In his correspondence with Magnus, Cyprian was concerned only to show that the church is one and that the sacrament of baptism is available to only those within it. Those *foris positi* have no access and no hope of redemption. But, as the controversy reached its peak with Stephen's rejection of the North African custom, Cyprian became aware of a broader issue. Unity was, at first, a matter of laity and clergy submitting to their God-ordained bishop. Novatian, who tried to usurp Cornelius and later established himself in opposition as *pseudoepiscopus*, clearly was outside the unified body of Christ. But this understanding no longer served him when bishops – including the bishop of Rome – were in a state of theological disunity. Unity then became a matter of adherence to the source of tradition that was first entrusted to Peter – and Peter alone – by Jesus before his resurrection. The *Song*, in the letter to Jubaianus and the *Textus Receptus*, came to bear the weight of this new understanding of unity. In so doing, Cyprian established the parameters according to which the Song would be read and interpreted for over a century.

II. THE EARLY COMMENTARIES

1. Victorinus of Poetovio

Victorinus, bishop of Poetovio in the Pannoniae, was the first to write biblical commentaries in Latin, covering at least nine books of the bible, including the *Song of Songs*. The only extant commentary is the *In Apocalypsin*, but Jerome preserves a list of other works still circulating in the late fourth century: 'Victorinus, bishop of Poetovio, was not equally skilled in Latin as in Greek. Thus although his works are great in thought, they are rather base in style. They are as follows: Commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Habakuk, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Apocalypse of John, *Against All Heresies*, and many others. At the end he was crowned a martyr'.⁷⁷ We cannot be certain of the precise dates that Victorinus was active, but he

⁷⁷ *De Vir. Ill.* (PL 23:683B-C): *Victorinus, Petavionensis episcopus, non aequè Latine ut Graece noverat. Unde opera ejus grandia sensibus, viliora videntur compositione verborum. Sunt autem haec:*

cannot have lived beyond the early fourth century, for he died a martyr. Jerome generally places him before Lactantius and after Cyprian and Minucius Felix.⁷⁸ The ninth-century martyrologies of Florus, Usuard, and Adon as well as the *Martyrologium Romanum* place his martyrdom during the persecution of Diocletian.⁷⁹ Dulaey speculates, based upon Jerome's silence on the era of Victorinus' martyrdom, that he may have died in the small persecution of Numerian in 283-4, but there is no historical evidence supporting the hypothesis.⁸⁰ His writings may thus be placed sometime in the final quarter of the third century.

Although no vestiges of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* remain, Jerome made frequent remarks both in his epistles and biblical commentaries regarding the sources of Victorinus' exegesis. According to Jerome, Victorinus could read and write Greek fluently (indeed, more skilfully than he could Latin) and his commentaries drew heavily upon those of both Hippolytus and Origen. In a letter to Pope Damasus regarding some exegetical *quaestiones*, he mentions specifically Victorinus' debt to Hippolytus in his interpretation of Genesis: 'We shall set forth the words of Hippolytus the martyr, from whom our Victorinus [*Victorinus noster*] rarely deviates'.⁸¹ This remark could well suggest that Damasus possessed copies of at least some of Victorinus' exegetical works, demonstrating that he continued to be read by the learned well into the late fourth century. Jerome, however, more frequently emphasizes Victorinus' reliance upon Origen. In several places, particularly during the heat of the Origenist controversy, Jerome refers to Victorinus' commentaries as paraphrases of Origen's works. When Jerome defends his work of translating Origen to Vigilantius, he makes recourse to his orthodox forebears who have done the same, concluding: 'I keep silent concerning Victorinus of Poetovio and others who followed and expanded Origen at least in their

Commentarii in Genesim, in Exodum, in Leviticum, in Isaia, in Ezechiel, in Abacuc, in Ecclesiasten, in Cantica Canticorum, in Apocalypsim Joannis, adversum omnes haereses, et multa alia. Ad extremum martyrio coronatus est.

⁷⁸ *Epp.* 49.13, 19; 58.10, 60.10.

⁷⁹ See the references in M. Dulaey, *Victorin de Poetovio: Premier exégète Latin II* (Peripignan, 1994), p. 9. H. Quentin, *Les martyrologues historiques du Moyen-Age* (Paris, 1908), remains the authoritative work on the development of the early medieval martyrologies.

⁸⁰ Dulaey, *Premier exégète I*, p. 12.

⁸¹ *Ep.* 36.16 (CSEL 54, p. 283): *Hippolyti martyris verba ponemus, a quo et Victorinus noster non plurimum discrepat.*

interpretation of the Scriptures'.⁸² Again, writing to Pammachius and Oceanus, he remarks, 'I am neither more eloquent than Hilary nor more faithful than Victorinus, who have brought over his homilies [into Latin] not as translators, but as authors of their own works'.⁸³ Finally, in his *Apologia adversus Rufinum*, Jerome says that his issue with Rufinus is not that he translated Origen, because 'I have done this, as have Victorinus, Hilary, and Ambrose before me'.⁸⁴ Jerome, of course, is not here speaking of proper translations, but rather of paraphrasing.

It is, in light of these remarks, entirely likely that Victorinus drew upon both Origen and Hippolytus in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. It remains, however, to consider the nature of this borrowing. If Victorinus incorporated elements from Origen's exegetical works into his own writings and his biblical commentaries circulated widely across the Latin West, we could conclude that Origen's 'psychological' interpretation of the Song would have been widely known, embedded as part of the fabric of the Latin tradition from a quite early date. There are, however, good reasons for supposing that Victorinus eschewed the personal dimension of Origen's exegesis.

Working out the precise relationship between Victorinus and Origen and Hippolytus is a rather difficult task, given that only Victorinus' *Apocalypse* commentary is extant, and we have no extant commentary on that text by either Hippolytus or Origen. M. Dulaey has done the careful work of tracing out the instances in Victorinus' writings where he has relied upon Hippolytus and Origen.⁸⁵ There are not a great number of similarities between the fragments of Victorinus and Origen's extant writings, but there is one very striking point of reliance. Victorinus, in his *in Apocalypsin*, follows Origen in interpreting the veil Moses wears when descending from Sinai (*Exod* 34:33) as the veil placed over the text of Scripture, so that its true meaning was hidden from the Jews

⁸² Ep. 61.2 (CSEL 54, p. 577-8): *Taceo de Victorino Petobiensi et ceteris, qui Origenem in explanatione dumtaxat scripturarum secuti sunt et expresserunt.*

⁸³ Ep. 84.2 (CSEL 55, p. 130): *Nec disertiores sumus Hilario nec fideliores Victorino, qui tractatus eius non ut interpretes, sed ut auctores proprii operis transtulerunt.*

⁸⁴ *Apol. Adv. Ruf.* 3.14 (CCSL 79, p. 86): *Ego non accusavi quare Origenem pro voluntate transtuleris: hoc enim et ipse feci, et ante me Victorinus, Hilarius, Ambrosiusque fecerunt.*

⁸⁵ Dulaey, *exégète*, pp. 288-93, 295-99.

and only revealed with the coming of Christ.⁸⁶ Moreover, both link this comment to exegesis of *Apoc* 5:5, ‘the lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered’. Victorinus interprets this text as revealing the concealed meaning of *Gen* 48:8-9.⁸⁷ Origen, slightly differently, continues the citation to include ‘and opened the books and loosed the scrolls [*aperire librum, et solvere signacula*]’, which for him signifies Christ’s revealing of the meaning of the Old Testament.⁸⁸ The themes of the hiddenness of the meaning of the Old Testament, Christ as the key to its interpretation, and the unity of the two Testaments play a prominent role in Victorinus’ *Apocalypse* commentary and can be traced quite clearly to Origen, and, to a lesser extent, Hippolytus.

Victorinus sees in the Old Testament and the *Apocalypse* figures of Christ, the gospels, the church, and the final judgment, but the only instance in which he speaks of the individual soul is in his discussion of *Apoc* 6:9, where the scriptural text explicitly refers to the ‘souls of the slain [*animas occisorum*]’.⁸⁹ In his exegesis of the *Apocalypse*, Victorinus does not only find prophecies of the events of the final judgment, as we may well expect, but discerns references to events in the life of the church that have already happened. Commenting on *Apoc* 4:1, ‘a door opened in the heavens [*ostium apertum in caelo*]’, he says that this was a door that had initially been closed to men, but was opened ‘when Christ ascended with his body to his Father in heaven’.⁹⁰ Moreover, the ‘sea of glass like crystal’ of *Apoc* 4:6 is ‘the gift of baptism, which God poured out through his Son in the time of repentance, before the judgment’.⁹¹ Victorinus also sees in the four living creatures of *Apoc* 4:7 and the twenty-four elders of *Apoc* 4:10 figures of the books of Scripture: the four living creatures ‘are the gospels [*quattuor sunt evangelia*]’ and the twenty-four elders are ‘the books of the law and prophets [*libri*

⁸⁶ Origen, *In Ezekielem* 14.2 (SC 352, p. 458); Victorinus, *in Apocalypsin* 5.2 (SC 423, pp. 74-6).

⁸⁷ *Apoc.* 5.2.

⁸⁸ *Ezek.* 14.2.

⁸⁹ *Apoc.* 6.4 (SC 423, p. 80).

⁹⁰ *Apoc.* 4.1 (SC 423, p. 64): *quando Christus cum corpore in caelis ad Patrem ascendit.*

⁹¹ *Apoc.* 4.2 (SC 423, p. 66): *donum est baptismi, quod per Filium suum paenitentiae tempore, antequam iudicium inducat, effundit.*

prophetarum et legis’];⁹² the twenty-four elders are later taken to refer to the twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles.⁹³

Victorinus followed Origen in his understanding that the Old Testament could only properly be interpreted in the light of Christ, and in interpreting images from the Old and New Testaments as types of Christ and the church. But there is absolutely no indication that Victorinus followed Origen in interpreting Scripture in light of the individual soul. I would thus argue that if, as seems quite possible, Victorinus knew Origen’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, he would have brought over into his own exegesis the ecclesiological level of Origen’s exegesis, but not the psychological.

2. Reticus of Autun

Reticus, bishop of Autun (Augustodunensis) in the early fourth century, was the only other early Latin writer to compose a commentary on the *Song*.⁹⁴ His precise dates and the length of his tenure are unknown. Jerome writes: ‘Reticus, bishop of the Aedui, that is, of Autun, under Constantine possessed a celebrated reputation among the Gauls. His *Commentaries on the Songs of Songs* and another large volume *Against Novatian* are read, but other than these I have found no work of his’.⁹⁵ We know, at least, that Reticus was bishop in 313-14; he, along with Maternus of Cologne and Marinus of Arles, was sent to Rome to join fifteen Italian bishops as arbitrators in a council, under the presidency of Miltiades, that was to decide whether to recognize the ordination of Caecilian as bishop of Carthage.⁹⁶ The following year, Constantine called a larger, more

⁹² *Apoc.* 4.3 (SC 423, p. 66).

⁹³ *Apoc.* 4.4.

⁹⁴ On the commentary of Reticus, see G. Morin, ‘Reticus d’Autun et “Beringer”’, *RBen* (1896): pp. 340-1; Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, p. 27.

⁹⁵ *De vir. ill.* 82 (PL 23:691A): *Rheticus Aeduorum, id est, Augustodunensis Episcopus, sub Constantino celeberrimae famae habitus est in Galliis. Leguntur ejus Commentarii in Cantica canticorum, et aliud grande volumen adversus Novatianum, nec praeter haec quidquam ejus operum reperi.*

⁹⁶ The supporters of Majorinus petitioned Constantine to send Gallic bishops to Carthage to mediate between their party and the party of Caecilian, whose election they contested. They asked for bishops from Gaul because Constantine’s father had not enforced, at least not strictly, persecution of the Christians in 303 (Optatus, *Against the Donatists* 1.22). Constantine, however, summoned a small council at Rome under Miltiades, which met on 2 October 313 (Optatus, *Against the Donatists* 1.23-4; Eusebius, *HE* 10.5.18-20). Jerome, in a letter to Marcella, relates Reticus’ participation at this council as well, but

universal council at Arles, which met on 1 August 314, to settle the question, and Reticus was a subscriber to the canons that this council produced.⁹⁷ Beyond this, we lose any trace of Reticus, but if he had a ‘celebrated reputation’ among the Gauls, it is likely that his episcopate stretched well beyond 314.

It is curious indeed why, if Reticus were not a systematic biblical exegete as was Victorinus, he would have chosen to compose a commentary on the *Song of Songs*. The answer may, in part, lie in Reticus’ participation at the synods of Rome and Arles. It is clear both from Optatus’ account of the proceedings at Rome and from the canons produced at Arles that the ‘African law’ of rebaptism was at issue during these proceedings. Optatus writes: ‘Donatus was condemned by each, because he confessed that he rebaptised and laid hands upon lapsed bishops, which is alien to the church’.⁹⁸ The ninth canon of Arles, moreover, states: ‘Concerning the Africans who are using their own law, namely that of rebaptism: it is resolved that, if anyone should come [to the church] from heresy, they are to question him on the creed, and if they consider that he was baptized in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, only let there be an imposition of hands upon him so that he might receive the Holy Spirit. But if under questioning he does not confess this Trinity, then let him be baptized.’⁹⁹ The synod convoked by Cyprian in September 256 seems to have established rebaptism as a pervasive practice throughout Africa, so it is unsurprising that Majorinus and Donatus would have rebaptized those from other communions. It is, in fact, rather surprising that Caecilian would not rebaptize, but this seems to have been the case, as Optatus reports that only Donatus was censured for so doing. We cannot be certain on what scriptural and theological grounds Donatus justified the practice of rebaptism. He wrote a letter on

mistakenly thinks that it was held under Silvester (*ep.* 37.1). On the council at Rome, see T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 57.

⁹⁷ Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 57-8.

⁹⁸ 1.24.1 (SC 412, p. 224): *A singulis in Donatum sunt hae sententiae latae, quod confessus sit se rebaptizasse et episcopis lapsis manum imposuisse, quod ecclesia alienum est.*

⁹⁹ *Canones ad Silvestrum* (CCSL 148, p.10): *De Afris quod propria lege sua utuntur ut rebaptizent, placuit ut si ad ecclesiam aliquis de haeresi venerit, interrogent eum symbolum, et si perviderint eum in Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum esse baptizatum, manus ei tantum imponatur ut accipiat Spiritum (Sanctum); quod si interrogatus non responderit hanc Trinitatem, baptizetur.* It is listed as canon eight in *A R Sp*, and as canon four in *C k l y*. In all six manuscripts of the *Epistula ad Silvestrum* (CCSL 148, pp. 4-6), it is listed as canon nine.

the subject, preserved in Augustine's *Contra epistulam Donati haeretici*, of which survives only a very brief summary in the *Retractiones*. Donatus' successor Parmenian and some of Augustine's contemporaries, however, used images from the *Song*, which had first been adduced by Cyprian, to argue that baptism could not be valid when performed outside the bounds of the true church.¹⁰⁰ It is quite possible that Donatus adduced these same texts at Rome and Arles in support of rebaptism, and this may have led Reticus to take an interest in the text.

Unlike Victorinus' commentary, however, not all traces of Reticus' work have been lost. In 384, Marcella wrote to Jerome requesting a copy of the work. Rather than send the work, Jerome wrote a short, vitriolic letter in reply, denouncing Reticus' abilities as an exegete. He says that he was 'amazed that this eloquent man, besides his other inept opinions, thought that Tharsis (*Song* 5:14) was the city of Tarsus, in which Paul was born, and that the gold of Ofaz (*Song* 5:11) signified the rock, because Cephas is called Peter in the gospel'.¹⁰¹ Jerome goes on to criticize Reticus' seeming ignorance of any other sources: 'I ask, did he not have the ten volumes of Origen, did he not have other interpreters, or even certain Hebrew friends, whom he might ask or read the meaning of what he did not know.'¹⁰²

Jerome's critique of Reticus' knowledge of other interpreters should be taken with a grain of salt, representing the views of a trilingual biblical exegete of the late fourth century with a large library at his disposal, rather than what might be reasonably expected, or even desired, from an early fourth century Gallic bishop. It is difficult to imagine many of Reticus' Latin contemporaries faulting him for ignoring a lengthy and complex work composed in Greek, which would have been incredibly expensive to obtain or copy given its size. We cannot even be sure that Reticus read Greek with any fluency. And consulting Jewish 'friends' to obtain the proper interpretation of biblical passages would likely have been viewed as a suspicious activity, which would have

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion.

¹⁰¹ *Ep.* 37.1 (CSEL 54, p. 286): *vehementer miratus sum virum eloquentem praeter ineptias sensuum ceterorum Tharsis urbem putasse Tarsum in qua Paulus apostolus natus sit, et aurum Ofaz petram significari quod Cephas in evangelio Petrus sit appellatus.*

¹⁰² *Ep.* 37.3 (CSEL 54, p. 288): *Rogo, non habuerat decem Origenis volumina, non interpretes ceteros aut certe aliquos necessarios Hebraeorum aut ut interrogaret aut legeret, quid sibi vellent quae ignorabat?*

undermined the authority of the Septuagint, on which the Old Latin translations were based. So we need not conclude from Jerome's letter that Reticus' commentary would have been looked on with scorn and not circulated widely. Indeed, Reticus' work may have obtained some measure of popularity, at least in Gaul. In the twelfth century, Berengar of Poitiers wrote a vicious apology against Bernard of Clairvaux following the Council of Sens, at which Peter Abelard was condemned. He accuses Bernard in the composition of his *Homilies on the Song of Songs* of ignoring the *maiores nostri*, the four great classic commentators on the *Song* – Origen, Ambrose, Reticus, and Bede¹⁰³ – and of turning a wedding song into a funeral march.¹⁰⁴ Reticus' commentary thus seems still to have been read and cherished. Berengar cites a fragment from the *aurea camena* ('golden poem') of Reticus, which may be the title under which his commentary on the *Song* (the golden poem) was known, to demonstrate the proper frame within which the *Song* ought to be interpreted: '*Mos est, inquit, generosae materiae observandus, sponsi sponsaque tripudia festiva tuba persultent. Neque enim in funera fas distrahi animum, quoniam ad exponendum cantica nuptiarum invitat alacritas convivarum. Sed quoniam tantae facultae ratio in nobis vel nulla est vel admodum orba, eius innitar gratiae, qui per evangelium suum sonat: Sine me nihil potestis facere. Neque certe mihi deficiet transitorium verbum, cum credam in Verbum quod est in principio apud Deum.*'¹⁰⁵

From the comments of Jerome and the fragment preserved by Berengar, we can recover some traces of the substance of Reticus' commentary. From the fragment, we can discern that Reticus seems to have attempted to interpret the divine marriage in the *Song of Songs* in light of the customs (*mores*) of human marriages. It is thus likely that nuptial theology figured prominently in the commentary; it is, however, impossible to

¹⁰³ *Apologeticus Contra beatum Bernardum* (PL 178:1863B-C): *Nam, si majores nostri plenarie sufficienterque libri hujus latebras produxerunt in solem, miror qua fronte ausus tuos extenderis in opus elimatum ad unguem...ac ne quis me putet improbabilia prolocutum, proferam super hunc librum quadrigam expositorum, Origenem scilicet Graecum, Ambrosium Mediolanensem, Retium Augustodunensem, Bedam Angligenam.*

¹⁰⁴ *Apologeticus Contra beatum Bernardum* (PL 178:1863D-1864A): *At Bernardus aut rerum obscurarum taedio victus, aut negligens Apostoli dictum suadentis gaudere cum gaudentibus, mortuum suum ducit ad nuptias.*

¹⁰⁵ *Apologeticus Contra beatum Bernardum* (PL 178:1864B).

know the extent to which he follows through on this. He seems also to have acknowledged, by invoking the grace of the divine Word, the difficulty of the task of interpreting the *Song*. From Jerome's comments, we can discern the ecclesiological nature of Reticus' interpretation. *Song* 5:11 and 14 foreshadow the figures of Paul and Peter and thereby the establishing of the church. His commentary may, perhaps, have traced in historical fashion the history of the church. However crude and inept such a move would have appeared to Jerome, it would fit in well with the strongly Christological and ecclesiological content of most early Latin biblical exegesis.¹⁰⁶

3. Conclusions

Despite the relative paucity of biblical commentaries composed in Latin in the third and early fourth centuries, the *Song of Songs* seems to have been well represented. Although the two earliest commentaries have since been lost, I have demonstrated that they are likely to have been strictly ecclesiological in character. Reticus saw in its images types of the founding of the church, and based upon Victorinus' exegesis of the *Apocalypse*, he may well have done the same. I have argued, moreover, that through Victorinus' commentary, Origen's interpretation of the Song entered the Latin tradition, but in a strictly ecclesiological, not psychological, mode. It is rather difficult to say how widely diffused the commentaries of Victorinus and Reticus were. Jerome, nearly a century later, had copies of both. I will argue in subsequent chapters that Victorinus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (along with at least several others) was known in Spain, and served as the basis for Gregory of Elvira's *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. Therefore, although this earliest commentary has been lost to view in its original form, I believe that much of it survives through Gregory's interpretation of the Song.

¹⁰⁶ On which see Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOURTH CENTURY LEGACY: NORTH AFRICA AND SPAIN

I. DONATISTS AND CATHOLICS IN NORTH AFRICA

Following the September synod of 256, we hear little more of schism in North Africa. Fifty years later, however, a new crisis would once again divide the church, and Cyprian's rebaptism epistles – including his interpretation of the *Song of Songs* – would come to play a key role in the controversy. Timothy Barnes has succinctly remarked that 'the early years of Donatism will never be more than imperfectly known'.¹ The present study, owing to constraints of space, will not consider in any significant detail the problems of the early chronology of the schism. It is, however, clear that the schism has its origins in Diocletian's persecuting edict, which the African proconsul and the Numidian governor began to enforce in the spring 303, exceeding the measures specified by requiring all Christians to sacrifice.² Almost immediately, two competing approaches to the harsh persecution began to develop. Mensurius, Carthage's bishop, deceived authorities by surrendering heretical books in place of the scriptures. He was opposed to the bombastic displays of some martyrs, refusing even to recognize as confessors those who voluntarily presented themselves to authorities. Secundus, bishop of Tigisis in Numidia, however, with whom Mensurius was in communication, found such an approach to be cowardly and refused any type of compromise with the authorities.³ Secundus' rigorism and respect for confessors would come to characterize much of Numidian Christianity in the following decades.

The chronological problems arise when we turn to the story of Felix, one of Mensurius' deacons. Felix was said to have composed a letter *de tyranno imperatore*

¹ T.D. Barnes, 'The Beginnings of Donatism', *JTS* 26/1 (1975), p. 13.

² Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 54. The edict was first issued in Nicomedia on 23 February (*ibid.*, p. 22).

³ Augustine, *Brev. Coll.* 3.13.25; cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 54-5; Monceaux, *Histoire Littéraire* t. 5, pp. 9-10; Frend, *Donatist Church*, p. 142.

and had to seek out the protection of Mensurius.⁴ Refusing to surrender Felix to the authorities, Mensurius was summoned to the emperor at Rome; he died on his return to Carthage, leaving the see vacant.⁵ Caecilian was elected as his successor and was consecrated by Felix, bishop of Abthungi.⁶ According to Optatus, the *seniores* Botrus and Caelestius then hatched a plot against Caecilian over their loss of some of the church plate that Mensurius had earlier entrusted to them, enlisting the help of a rich widow.⁷ The Numidian bishops soon became involved, likely because Caecilian shared his predecessor's lukewarm attitude towards confessors,⁸ and held a council, under the presidency of Secundus, which deposed Caecilian on the grounds that Felix of Abthungi, who ordained him, was a *traditor*. Caecilian asked to be reordained, but the council declined his request and ordained Majorinus in his stead.⁹

The disputed question, however, is when precisely this sequence of events occurred. The traditional narrative assumes that Mensurius was summoned to Rome by the 'usurping emperor' Maxentius in 311/12, shortly after he wrested control of Africa back from the *vicarius* Domitius Alexander, and that the schism was in its infancy when Constantine became master of Africa in 312. T.D. Barnes, following up the initial hypothesis of Otto Seeck,¹⁰ has argued for a different chronology based upon the translation of *tyrannus imperator* as 'persecuting emperor', rather than 'usurping emperor', which he argues better fits Christian usage of the time.¹¹ The epithet 'persecuting emperor' could only fit Maximian – not Maxentius, who granted toleration to African Christians in 306 – and must mean that the incident with Felix and Mensurius occurred in 304/5.¹² Optatus, he notes, also seems to distinguish this *tyrannus imperator* from Maxentius at 1.17-8. He argues, moreover, that scholars have misinterpreted

⁴ Optatus 1.16.

⁵ Optatus 1.17.

⁶ Optatus 1.18.

⁷ Optatus 1.18. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 56, rightly expresses doubt over the veracity of the story.

⁸ Frend, *Donatist Church*, p. 142, argues that 'the fifty years that separate Cyprian from the Great Persecution had brought the Carthaginian clergy firmly on the side of Rome on the question of rebaptism'.

⁹ Optatus 1.19.

¹⁰ O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der Antiken Welt iii* (Stuttgart, 1921), p. 509.

¹¹ Barnes, 'Donatism', pp. 18-9.

¹² Barnes, 'Donatism', p. 19.

Maxentius' restoration of property to African Christians in 311 as his grant of toleration, meaning that an episcopal election could have been held in Carthage as early as 306/7. W.H.C. Frend rejects Barnes' arguments on the (tenuous) grounds that the account is too 'congested'. Frend asserts that Optatus' account presupposes a time when the persecution was relaxed, and since the final persecutions happened in December 304, the entire narrative – from Mensurius' harbouring of Felix to his death – must have occurred between January and 1 May 305, when Maximian abdicated.¹³ But there seems to be nothing explicitly in the account that presupposes the complete end of persecution, leaving open Barnes' suggestion of 304 for the start of the affair; and, as Barnes later asserts, Mensurius may have been summoned by Severus, rather than the *tyrannus imperator* himself, removing the terminus of 1 May 305.¹⁴ On the whole, Barnes' chronology should be preferred because it makes better sense of the literary evidence (especially the *tyrannus imperator*) and allows for a more realistic period of time in which the hostility could foment between the election of Caecilian and the letters of Constantine to Anullinus in 312/13. But, whatever the sequence, Majorinus never made it to Rome. In his stead went the newly elected rigorist bishop Donatus, who in time would give his name to the movement.¹⁵

1. Optatus: *Against the Donatists*

Optatus' *Against the Donatists* is an immensely important treatise, for it is the earliest surviving historical and theological account of the schism by either a catholic or Donatist hand. Optatus composed his treatise in response to an anti-catholic work in five books by Parmenian, Donatus' successor as bishop of Carthage, and he engages with his opponent in sufficient depth to allow us to reconstruct the main lines of his

¹³ K. Clancey and W.H.C. Frend, 'When Did the Donatist Schism Begin?' *JTS* 28/1 (1977), p. 107.

¹⁴ Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 315, n. 124. One wishes that Barnes offered a rather more serious and detailed refutation of the actual arguments Frend advances than he does in *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 316, n. 129. He asserts that Frend's argument relies on the 'erroneous premise' that Maxentius' grant of toleration in 306/7 is confused with the restoration of ecclesiastical property in 311, but Frend clearly distinguishes the two ('Donatist Schism', pp. 104, 107).

¹⁵ Optatus 1.24.

argument.¹⁶ It is clear that Parmenian follows Cyprian in using *Song* 4:12-15 and 6:8 to inscribe the boundaries of the one true church, demonstrating that it alone possesses the right of baptism.¹⁷ It is likely that Donatus before him had appropriated Cyprian's arguments in support of rebaptism, including those two prominent proof-texts from the *Song*.¹⁸ Parmenian was, however, an intellectual in his own right, who developed a sophisticated ecclesiology, in which the true church could be identified on the basis of its possession of six gifts (*dots*), which are the episcopal chair (*cathedra*), the angel (*angelus*), the Holy Spirit (*spiritus*), the fountain (*fons*), the creed/seal (*sigillum*), and the altar (*altar*).¹⁹ The latter three are rooted in the language on the *Song*: the fountain and its seal, the creed, derive from the *fons signatus* of *Song* 4:12, and Parmenian asserts that the *umbilicus ut crater tornatilis* of *Song* 7:2 is the altar.²⁰ Optatus was in agreement regarding the first five, but he disputed the sixth gift, since, he argues, 'If the navel is a part of the body, it cannot be one of the gifts, since it is a part of the body'.²¹

Optatus' own interpretation of the *Song* follows closely that of Parmenian (and, hence, Cyprian), and he often lauds him on his views: 'Rightly have you closed the garden to heretics [*bene clausisti hortum haereticis*]', and 'In this alone, brother Parmenian, I am not able to be ungrateful to you...that you have praised our church – that is, the catholic church – in enumerating her gifts (although you are incorrect regarding their number) and in saying that she is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed,

¹⁶ 1.5.1; 1.6.1-2. The five books of Parmenian's work are as follows: I. Analogies and praises of baptism (*comparationes laudesque baptismatis*); II. The Church is one, with the heretics being excluded (*exclusis haereticis unam dixisti esse ecclesiam*); III. Accusations against unnamed *traditores* (*traditores nullis certis personis aut nominibus accusati*); IV. Polemic against the workers for unity (*a te unitatis lacerati sunt operarii*); V. The oil and the sacrifice of the sinner (*de oleo et sacrificio peccatoris*).

¹⁷ 1.12.2; 2.1.1-2, 13.1, 18.6.

¹⁸ As noted above, Optatus reports that Donatus was condemned in Rome (October 313) for 'having rebaptized and laid hands on lapsed bishops [*quod confessus sit se rebaptizasse et episcopis lapsis manum imposuisse*]' (1.24.1; SC 412, p. 224). Donatus' justification for this practice must have been rooted in the authority of Cyprian. We know, moreover, from Augustine's description of his now-lost *Contra epistulam Donati haeretici* (*Retr.* 1.21) that Donatus composed a letter clearly outlining his theology of rebaptism. Donatus cited *Ecclesiasticus* 34:30 in support of his position, but we do not know what other texts he used.

¹⁹ 2.5-8.

²⁰ 2.8.1-2 (SC 412, p. 258).

²¹ 2.8.2 (SC 412, p. 260).

and the only bride'.²² He differs primarily in identifying the enclosed garden and one bride as the catholic, rather than Donatist, church.²³ Optatus also offers an interpretation of *Song* 4:8, the first (extant) citation of this text by a Latin author, to argue that the church ought to be obedient to the authorities of the state: 'For the republic is not in the church, but the church in the republic, that is in the Roman Empire, which Christ calls *Libanus* in the *Song of Songs*: *Come, my spouse, come from Libanus*, that is from the Roman Empire.'²⁴ Imperial support caused a good deal of resentment towards the catholics by the Donatists, who saw themselves as the church of the pure martyrs, and Optatus is here using the Song in support of his argument that disrespect towards imperial authorities is unscriptural.²⁵

There is another salient difference, which is the divergent consequences that Optatus and Parmenian draw from their competing readings of these verses. For Parmenian, as for Cyprian, it is only in the true Church – in the garden enclosed where there is the sealed font – that the sacraments truly exist.²⁶ Optatus, however, distinguishes between 'heresy' and 'schism'. Heretics alone, he claims, possess 'false baptisms' [*falsa baptisma*], since they are 'exiles from the truth and deserters of the complete and most true Creed [*veritatis exules, sani et verissimi symboli desertores*]'.²⁷ He concedes that although schismatics are 'not in the catholic church, these things cannot be denied, since you share with us the true sacraments [*quia nobiscum vera et*

²² 1.12.2 (SC 412, p. 198); 2.13.1 (SC 412, p. 266).

²³ 2.1.1-2. Optatus also cites the Song at 1.10.2-3; 2.1.1-2, 8.1, 11.1, 13.3, 18.6, 3.5.

²⁴ 3.3.5 (SC 413, p. 22): *Non enim respublica est in ecclesia, sed ecclesia in republica, id est in imperio romano quod Libanum appellat Christus in canticis canticorum, cum dicit: Veni, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, id est de imperio Romano.*

²⁵ Optatus invokes the Song after relating how Donatus heaped verbal abuse– shouting 'What has the Empire to do with the Church?' – upon the commission of Paul and Macarius, who were sent to Africa by the Emperor Constans in 347 (3.1.1). There appears to be, however, an element of irony in the story that Frend misses (*Donatist Church*, pp. 177-8). According to Optatus, Paul and Macarius, who were responsible for a great persecution of the Donatists in 346/7, came not at the request of the catholics, but at the behest of Donatus himself, 'struggling to be thought great' (3.1.1). It is thus not only unscriptural for the Donatists to decry imperial intervention, but in fact hypocritical, since they were the ones who appealed to the Emperor in the first place.

²⁶ 1.10.2,4 (SC 412, pp. 192-4): *Interea dixisti apud haereticos dotes ecclesiae esse non posse...[4] dixisti enim inter cetera schismaticos a vite velut sarmenta esse concisos destinatos poenis tamquam ligna arida gehennae ignibus reservari.*

²⁷ 1.12.1 (SC 412, p. 198).

communia sacramenta traxistis]²⁸ The distinction for Optatus turns on the *symbolum*. The heretics have a deviant theology and, perhaps the key issue, are not baptized with the proper Trinitarian formula. That alone determines the validity of the baptism. In this, he may well be following the distinction laid down by the ninth canon of Arles concerning the African practice of rebaptism, which is cited above.²⁹ It is the proper performance of the sacrament that is at issue, not the one performing it. To draw upon later scholastic terminology, it is *ex opere operato* and not *ex opere operantis*.

Song 6:8 and 4:12-15 for Optatus demonstrate that there is one church, an enclosed garden in which there is the sealed baptismal font, but this is no longer a sufficient basis for concluding that valid sacraments are available only to those who are a part of this one church. Optatus' exegesis of the *Song* may not, however, be as far from Cyprian's as may initially seem. Cyprian, we ought to recall, at the start of the rebaptism controversy in his Letter to Magnus used these verses from the *Song* as straightforward proof-texts demonstrating the appropriateness of rebaptising *haereticos et schismaticos*.³⁰ Two years later, in his Letter to Pompeius and in the *Textus Receptus* of the *De Unitate*, Cyprian became increasingly disturbed about the lack of theological and liturgical unity between bishops.³¹ Whereas Parmenian and most subsequent Donatist bishops, in increasingly extreme degrees, followed Cyprian's early use of the *Song* to demonstrate sacramental exclusivity, Optatus appears to follow Cyprian's later emphasis on theological and ecclesial unity. Nonetheless, Optatus is not able to demonstrate how, precisely, schismatics can have access to the sealed font of baptism, which is within the enclosed garden. It is only Augustine decades later who correctly realizes that a simple appropriation of Cyprian's exegesis of *Song* 4:12 as the baptismal font leaves little room for affirming the validity of baptism performed by schismatics.³²

There is some difficulty regarding the form of the work and its date of composition. Jerome knows a work by Optatus in six books that was composed during

²⁸ 1.12.3 (SC 412, p. 200).

²⁹ *Canones ad Silvestrum* (CCSL 148, p.10).

³⁰ *Ep.* 69.2.1.

³¹ Especially in *De unitate* (TR) 5.

³² Augustine, *De Baptismo* 4.7.10; 5.28.32; 6.3.5, 29.56; *Contra Cresconium* 1.34.40.

the reign of Valentinian and Valens (i.e., 364-367).³³ The work is, however, extant in seven books, with internal factors that require a later date. To safeguard the integrity of the catholic Church and its representatives in Rome, considered to be the principal see, Optatus lists the city's bishops beginning from Peter and ending with Siricius – but this requires a date of 384 or later for the treatise.³⁴ Adding to the confusion, in one section, Optatus treats Macrobius as if he were the current Donatist bishop of Rome, but then almost immediately mentions his successors Lucianus and Claudianus; the latter we know was bishop in 378.³⁵ The generally accepted solution to this problem is to propose that Optatus circulated two editions of *Against the Donatists* – the first, in six books, in c. 366; the second, with the addition of the seventh book, in c. 385.³⁶ He revised the lists of bishops, it is surmised, to reflect the later context of the second edition. This theory explains some of the discrepancies, but it is not wholly satisfactory. There is no surviving manuscript evidence of two distinct recensions. Three of the four extant complete manuscripts (*Remensis* 373, *Parisinus lat.* 1712, and *Parisinus lat.* 13335) attest seven books; *Cusanus* 50, the latest of the four (15th century), has only six, but Siricius still appears in the list of catholic Roman bishops, as do Lucianus and Claudianus in the Donatist list. The plan of the work, moreover, which Optatus outlines at 1.7, attests only six books.³⁷ It is surprising that Optatus would make the effort to update bishop lists, but not make any note of the revised structure of the work itself. It is also problematic to allow for a space of at least twenty years between the two editions.

³³ *Vir. Ill.* 110 (PL 23:705B): *Optatus Afer, episcopus Milevitanus, ex parte catholica, scripsit Valentiniano et Valente principibus, adversum Donatianae partis calumniam libros sex, in quibus asserit crimen Donatianorum in nos falso retorqueri.* Had it been later than 367, Jerome would have included Gratian, proclaimed Augustus by Valentinian in August of that year.

³⁴ 2.3.1.

³⁵ 2.4.2 (SC 412, p. 246): *Ergo restat ut fateatur socius vester Macrobius se ibi sedere ubi aliquando sedit Encolpius.* But see 2.4.5 (SC 412, p. 248): *Igitur quia Claudianus Luciano, Lucianus Macrobio, Macrobius Encolpio, Encolpius Bonifatio, Bonifatius Victori.* On the dates of Claudianus and Lucianus, see Edwards, *Donatists*, p. xvii.

³⁶ First proposed by P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe*, tom. 5 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1922), p. 251; recently, see, M. Edwards, *Optatus: Against the Donatists* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. xvi-xviii.

³⁷ 1.7.1-2: I. Cities, persons and names of the *traditores* and schismatics (*traditorum et schismaticorum indicandas esse civitates, personas et nomina*); II. Who and where is the one Church (*quae vel ubi sit una ecclesia*); III. Catholics did not request military intervention (*a nobis militem non esse petitum*); IV. Who is the sinner whose sacrifice God rejects (*qui sit peccator cuius sacrificium repudiat Deus*); V. On baptism (*de baptismo*); VI. The errors of the Donatists (*de incondideratis praesumptionibus et erroribus vestris*).

The opening lines of Book Seven do not read as if decades have passed: ‘After the *traditores* were made known and the holy church revealed, after the calumnies were refuted which you inflicted, and after your sins which deserved to be rebuked by God were revealed, in their proper order, both the meaning [*ratio*] of the sacraments and the obstinacy of your errors were shown. This ought to have been the end of our responses and statements. But since after the forest of malice has been cleared by axes of truth, I see even still provocations sprouting forth from you or from your circle – to the effect that it is not right [for us] to seek communion when it is agreed that you are sons of *traditores* – to which I shall respond’.³⁸

M. Labrousse has proffered two insights of some value regarding this problem. First, she notes the fundamentally different character of Book Seven. It is less thematically focused than the previous six, consisting of an appeal to unity (7.1-3) and three short refutations of seemingly unrelated objections, the subject matter of which relates to earlier books (7.4-7). The appeal to unity, moreover, does not fit with the proposed aims of the first six books of the treatise: ‘La polémique qui s’engage à nouveau au début du livre VII n’a plus pour objet de démontrer l’innocence des uns et la culpabilité des autres’.³⁹ Now that Optatus has proven his point that the Donatists are the *traditores* and schismatics and the catholics are the true Church, the latter possessing the proper understanding of the sacraments and not being guilty of misusing the authority of Empire, he must show the grounds on which unity can be sought. It may well be the case that Optatus envisaged what is now called ‘Book Seven’ as a postscript to be circulated with the treatise but not to be considered a part of it; this would explain why he did not alter his description of its form and why Jerome, in 392, knew only six books. There is, hence, only one ‘edition’ in six books. Secondly, Labrousse wisely separates the addition of ‘Book Seven’ from the changes made to the lists of bishops in

³⁸ 7.1.1 (SC 413, p. 192): *Post traditores ostensos et sanctam ecclesiam demonstratam, post repulsas quas ingerebatis calumnias et post peccata vestra quae a Deo increpari meruerunt, ordine suo et ratio sacramenti et praesumptiones vestrae et errores ostensi sunt. Iam responsorum dictorumque nostrorum finis esse debuerat. Sed quoniam post invidiae silvam securibus veritatis abscisam video adhuc vestras vel vestrorum provocaciones pullulare quas vos audio dicere ad unam communionem non oportuisse quaeri cum filios traditorum vos esse constiterit, ad ea pauca respondeam.*

³⁹ M. Labrousse, SC 412, p. 36; for the broader discussion see pp. 32-40.

2.3-4.⁴⁰ There is no reason to think that both were done at the same time, or even to suppose that Optatus was responsible for the latter. Separating the two allows Optatus' response to his critics to be drafted much closer to the date of the treatise's composition, perhaps only a year or two later. It is difficult to believe that the Donatists took two decades to respond – or for Optatus to fire back. It is not certain who revised the lists of bishops or why, but M. Edwards' claim that such a move would have hurt the historical reliability of the document by making it seem a later composition (and hence could only have been done by Optatus in a second edition) is unpersuasive.⁴¹ Optatus and his dossier came to be *the* source for the origins of the schism, and demonstrating the ongoing continuity of the catholic Roman bishops could only have strengthened the value of the work for catholics.

2. Tyconius and the *Liber Regularum*

Little is known of Tyconius, the lay Donatist theologian. He is important to the present study because his *Liber Regularum* – a hermeneutical treatise outlining seven mystical rules for the exegesis of scripture – is one of a very few extant Donatist texts, and in it he offers interpretations of several passages of the *Song of Songs*, some of which run counter to the mainline of Donatist exegesis. Gennadius' supplement to Jerome's *On Illustrious Men* is one of the few sources of information about Tyconius: 'Tyconius, an African by nationality, was sufficiently learned in divine letters, and not ignorant in secular matters; he had zeal, too, for matters of the church. He wrote *On the internal war* in three books and *Expositions of Diverse Causes* in which for the defence of his friends, he cites the ancient councils and from all of which he is recognized to have been from the Donatist party. He composed also seven rules for investigating and ascertaining the meaning of the Scriptures, which he combined in one volume. He also expounded the *Apocalypse* of John in full, regarding nothing in it in a carnal sense, but all in a spiritual

⁴⁰ Labrousse, SC 412, p. 40.

⁴¹ Edwards, *Donatists*, p. xvi.

sense.⁴² Tyconius, moreover, raised the ire of his fellow Donatists by contesting the increasingly provincial mindset of the movement and arguing forcefully for the mixed character of the church, leading to his eventual condemnation at a council in Carthage led by Parmenian.⁴³ Augustine provides a partial defense of Tyconius in his *Contra Epistulam Parmeniani*, written c. 400, which is a response to a letter that Parmenian wrote to Tyconius, in an attempt to persuade him to change his views. Augustine relates that Tyconius ‘was awakened, having been struck by all the voices of the holy scriptures and saw that the church of God was spread throughout the whole world’.⁴⁴ The claim that the true church existed only in Africa, which Parmenian espoused, was based upon a very clear conviction that communion with *traditores* sullied the purity of the church. The condemnation of Donatus and the practice of rebaptism, along with the recognition of the (alleged) *traditor* Caecilian as bishop of Carthage at Rome (313) and Arles (314), meant for Parmenian and his colleagues that ‘the whole world was stained with the crimes of *traditio* and other sacriliges’.⁴⁵ It is, moreover, likely that the persecution of the Donatists in 346/7 at the hands of Paul and Macarius served only to strengthen this conviction that the church outside of Africa was hopelessly corrupt church.

Tyconius, however, emphasized the mixed nature of the church. Rather than posit a true church of the pure and a false church of the *traditores*, Tyconius preferred the language of two ‘cities’, ‘buildings’, or ‘peoples’, which both co-habited in a single body, the church.⁴⁶ The separation of the two – entailing the vindication of the good

⁴² *De Vir. Ill.* 18 (PL 58:1071).

⁴³ Augustine, *C. Epist. Parm.* 1.1.1 (CSEL 51, p. 20): *et Parmenianus quidem primo eum per epistulam velut corrigendum putavit; postea vero etiam concilio eorum perhibent esse damnatum.*

⁴⁴ *C. Epist. Parm.* 1.1.1 (CSEL 51, p. 20): *Tychonius enim omnibus sanctarum paginarum vocibus circumtunsus evigilavit et vidit ecclesiam dei toto terrarum orbe diffusam.*

⁴⁵ Augustine, *C. Epist. Parm.* 1.3.4 (CSEL 51, p. 23): *Dicit etiam Parmenianus hinc probari consceleratum fuisse orbem terrarum criminibus traditionis et aliorum sacrilegiorum.* Parmenian, as quoted by Augustine, makes reference to two journeys (*adventus*) of Donatist witnesses (*testes*) to present their case; their rejection seems to entail, for Parmenian, the need to reject the ‘Gauls, Spanish, and Italians’ (1.2.2). This is likely a reference to Rome and Arles. Optatus (2.11.2) also makes reference to the belief of the Donatists that the true church exists in Africa alone.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., *Apoc.* 172 (Turin Fragment; Lo Bue, p. 96): ‘For there are two people [*duo populi*] in the Church, that is the party of God [*pars dei*], which is compared to light, and the party of the devil [*pars diaboli*], which is compared to the darkness of the shadows; *Apoc.* 413 (Turin Fragment; Lo Bue, p. 168): ‘For there are two buildings [*aedificia*] in the Church, one founded upon the rock, the other upon the sand;

[*boni*] and condemnation of the evil ones [*mali*] – will occur only at the final judgment, when the church, which has had to suffer evil in its midst, will be taken ‘from the midst’ of the doomed world.⁴⁷ In the meantime, while evil remains ‘in the midst’ of the church, it must be recognized and resisted. This struggle is the theme of his now-lost *On the Internal War*, and it is the task of the *Liber Regularum*, as Pamela Bright cogently argues, to guide the exegete in discerning and interpreting ‘those passages throughout Scripture that concern the mystery of evil, always active, always “separate from Jesus”’.⁴⁸ In the first of his ‘rules’ – *De Domini corpore* – Tyconius argues that, since the church is the body of Christ, who is the head, it is important to recognize what in Scripture ‘pertains to each [*quid cui conveniat*]’.⁴⁹ Certain texts, Tyconius argues, which appear to have a single subject, such as the suffering servant passage in *Isaiah* 53, can refer at certain points to Christ, the head, and at others to the Church, the body. Likewise, in his second ‘rule’ – *De Domini corpore bipertito* – Tyconius argues that the church is a mixed body, and in reading Scripture it is ‘by reason alone that the crossing over and return from one part of the body to the other, from the right to the left and from the left to the right, is made apparent’.⁵⁰ In spite of the need for vigilance and struggle against evil, as well as for the pursuit of grace through the practice of penitence, Tyconius accepts the inevitability – indeed, the necessity – of evil in the church, ultimately undermining the theological basis for the Donatists’ refusal of communion with *traditores*, although he himself remained a Donatist. Indeed, Augustine praises

Apoc. apud Beatus 506: ‘Behold, there are two cities [*civitates*], one of God and one of the devil [*unam Dei et unam Diaboli*]’.

⁴⁷ LR 2.22 (SC 488, p. 204); Burkitt, p. 28): The two who are separate are shown to be one until the time they are divided [*ambo qui separati sunt in uno futuri ante quam dividuntur ostensi sunt*]; LR 7.18.2 (SC 488, p. 370; Burkitt, pp. 84-5): ‘The fire is the church, which when it departs from the midst [*e medio*] of the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7), then the Lord will rain fire from the Lord down from the church [*pluet ignem Dominus a Domino de Ecclesia*]...for God, remembering the promise he made to Abraham, took Lot from all the cities of Sodom, upon which fire will come from the fire of the church [*qubius veniet ignis ex igni Ecclesiae*], which will be led out from their midst [*quae de medio eorum educetur*]’. On the themes of ‘in the midst’ and ‘from the midst’ in the *Liber Regularum*, see the excellent discussion in P. Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Inner Purpose and Logic* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 49-51.

⁴⁸ Bright, *Tyconius*, p. 51.

⁴⁹ LR 1.1 (SC 488, p. 134; Burkitt, p. 1).

⁵⁰ LR 2.1 (SC 488, p. 154; Burkitt, p. 8): *ratione sola videtur, ita a parte corporis ad partem, a dextera ad sinistram vel a sinistra ad dexteram, transitus reditusque ut in supradicto capite claret.*

Tyconius for his doctrine of the church, but faults him for ignoring the supposedly clear logical outcome of his theology – which, he notes, Parmenian well saw – that the Donatists could no longer justify their separate communion.⁵¹

The *Song of Songs* furnishes Tyconius with images that provide crucial support to his doctrine of the bipartite church. In the opening paragraphs of his discussion of the second rule, ‘On the Bipartite Body of the Lord’, he adduces a series of passages from Isaiah that, to his mind, require two distinct referents to be coherent, although there is only one named subject in the text. He begins with a citation of *Isa* 45:3-5: ‘Invisible treasures I shall show you, in order that you might know that I am the Lord, and I shall take you up... You, however, have not known that I am God and that there is no God other than me, and you were ignorant of me’.⁵² He then asks how the text can refer only to ‘one mind [*unam mentem*]’, if God both promises to reveal ‘invisible treasures’ and yet chastises for being ignorant that He is God. There must, he deduces, be two referents joined in a single subject, which are the two parts or peoples of the one church. Tyconius continues with several more citations from Isaiah that operate in the same fashion. It is only in the *Song*, however, that Tyconius finds an explicit statement regarding the mixed nature of the church: ‘Again, briefly, the body of Christ is shown to be bipartite: *I am black and beautiful*’ (*Song* 1:5). For the church, *which has no spot or wrinkle* (*Eph* 5:27) and the Lord cleansed with his own blood, is by no means black in any part, except in the left-hand part [*aliqua ex parte fusca sit nisi in parte sinistra*] through which *the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles* (*Rom* 2:24)’.⁵³ *Song* 1:5 is here taken to be the church’s proclamation that she is comprised of both *boni* and *mali*.

But Tyconius also takes the opportunity to nuance his discussion of the bipartite church in a way that he had not hitherto done. There is a tension, not fully resolved, between the church as mixed and the church as pure. By citing *Eph* 5:27, Tyconius

⁵¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 93.44.

⁵² *LR* 2.2 (SC 488, p. 154; Burkitt, p. 8): *Thesaurus invisibiles aperiam tibi, ut scias quoniam ego sum Dominus, et assumam te. Tu autem me non cognovisti quoniam ego sum Deus et non est absque me Deus, et nesciebas me.*

⁵³ *LR* 2.10 (SC 488, p. 160; Burkitt, p. 10).

seems to leave no room for any admixture of evil in the church and indeed asserts that she is in no way ‘black in any part [*aliqua ex parte fusca*]’. But he then immediately follows with the qualification ‘except in the left-hand part [*nisi in parte sinistra*]’. There thus seems to be some tension between the eschatological church, which will be removed from the midst of destruction, and the present church, which must accept the presence of evil in its midst. It is thus only this right-hand part of the present church, which will be vindicated in the final judgment, that can be the subject of the praise in *Song* 4:8: ‘You are wholly beautiful, my love, and there is no blame in you’.⁵⁴

Tyconius then takes the two analogies that the bride draws in *Song* 1:5 to her being ‘black and beautiful’ – ‘as the tent of Cedar, as the curtain of Solomon’ – to indicate that the church is both ‘royal’ and ‘servile’: ‘Two tabernacles are disclosed, one royal and one servile. Nevertheless, both are the seed of Abraham, because Kedar is the son of Ishmael’.⁵⁵ His tacit reference to the allegorization of Isaac and Ishmael in *Gal* 4:24 helps to support his theology of two different ‘peoples’ who are destined for different fates yet presently bound together as offspring of the one covenant promised to Abraham. Ultimately, Tyconius views the claim in *Song* 1:5 as decisive for his doctrine of the bipartite church. His fellow Donatists could not dispute that the bride who utters the words ‘I am black and beautiful’ is the church, since precious texts in support of rebaptism were based upon such an ecclesiological reading of the *Song*. The church, he concludes, is ‘not black on account of those who are outside’.⁵⁶ For the church to call herself black, she must be admitting to the existence of evil in her midst.

Tyconius again turns to the *Song* during a discussion of ‘sacred geography’ in the seventh and final rule, ‘On the Devil and His Body [*De Diabolo et eius corpore*]’, to support his doctrine of the bipartite church. He argues that ‘there are two parts in the Church, one part belonging to the south and the other to the north. The Lord dwells in the southern part, just as it is written: *Where you pasture, where you dwell in the south*

⁵⁴ LR 2.10 (SC 488, p. 160; Burkitt, p. 10): *Tota speciosa es proxima mea et reprehensio non est in te.*

⁵⁵ LR 2.10 (SC 488, p. 160; Burkitt, p. 10): *Duo tabernacula ostendit, regium et servile: utrumque tamen semen Abrahae; Cedar enim filius est Ishmael.*

⁵⁶ LR 2.10 (SC 488, p. 162; Burkitt, p.10-11): *Non enim Ecclesia in his qui foris sunt fusca.*

[*meridiano*] (*Song* 1:7).⁵⁷ The devil, meanwhile, dwells in the north. Indeed, Tyconius finds an analogy in the creation of the world itself in support of his ecclesiology: ‘This world was made according to the likeness of the church [*ad instar Ecclesiae*], in which the rising sun does not have a course except through the south [*in quo sol oriens non nisi per Austrum, id est meridianum*], and having crossed over the southern part, it returns invisibly to its original place. Thus also our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal sun, passes through his own part [*partem suam percurrit*], whence it is called south. As for the north, that is the enemy part, he does not rise’.⁵⁸ It is difficult to know whether in using a geographical analogy Tyconius is actually intending, subtly, to identify the *pars Ecclesiae* in Africa as that which belongs to Christ, and the *pars Ecclesiae* in Spain, Gaul, and Italy (i.e., ‘the north’) as that which belongs to Satan. Such a simple identification does not do justice to Tyconius’ understanding that the evil element in the church is hidden and visible only to those who can navigate the *immensa silva prophetiae*. Tyconius did, however, remain a Donatist, and he must therefore have held, in however nuanced a fashion, the belief that the church in Africa retained some special privilege. As we shall see in the section below, other Donatists were far more explicit in identifying the *meridianum* of *Song* 1:7 with Africa.

Even if Tyconius is in keeping with his fellow Donatists in privileging the African church, his interpretation of the *Song*, although still deeply ecclesiological, is of an entirely different sort. The traditional proof texts – *Song* 4:12 and 6:8 – are of little interest to him, at least in the *Liber Regularum*, as is the need to demonstrate the exclusive unity of the church. Rather, Tyconius finds in the *Song* the confession of a mixed church, which is shot through with evil that must be identified and resisted, in the knowledge that at the final judgment it will be *tota speciosa*. His concern is less with defining boundaries, and more with uncovering the mystery of that which lies within.

The question of the sources of his *Song* exegesis is an interesting one that is worth pursuing briefly. His interpretation cannot be traced back to Cyprian, for the

⁵⁷ LR 7.4.2 (SC 488, p. 332; Burkitt, p. 73): *Duae sunt partes in Ecclesia, Austri et Aquilonis, id est meridiana et septentrionalis. In parte meridiana Dominus manet, sicut scriptum: ubi pascis, ubi manes in meridiano.*

⁵⁸ LR 7.4.2 (SC 488, p. 334; Burkitt, p. 73).

Carthaginian bishop did not cite any of the texts that Tyconius adduces in the *Liber Regularum*. It is possible that Tyconius did not rely on any sources for his exegesis of *Song* 1:5 and 1:7, following simply what he took to be the plain sense of the texts. But his interpretation of both passages resembles, strikingly although not exactly, that of Gregory of Elvira. Tyconius and Gregory both understand the adjectives *fusca* and *decora* to refer respectively to sinfulness and purity. For Tyconius, the bride uses these terms to refer to her present mixed state, whereas Gregory takes the phrase to mean that the church had been stained with sin (specifically, the smoke of idolatry) but has since been purified by faith in Christ.⁵⁹ Their conclusions are, of course, opposed: Gregory posits a church of the pure and Tyconius a church of both *boni* and *mali*. But their understandings of the meanings of the terms employed in the passage are remarkably similar. It could be argued that such an interpretation of the passage would have been self-evident and could have been arrived at independently. Quintilian, for instance, in his *Institutio Oratoria* opposes *fusca* with *candida*, demonstrating the pejorative sense that *fusca* carried.⁶⁰ It is, however, notable that Tyconius selected this passage in the first place to demonstrate his point (Augustine, by contrast, prefers the image of the ‘lily and the thorns’ of *Song* 2:2). Tyconius and Gregory both also understand the word *meridiano* in *Song* 1:7 in its geographical sense. The Latin *meridies* or *meridianus*, as the Greek μεσημβρία of the Septuagint, can refer either to ‘midday’ or ‘the south, meridional’. The sense of the text seems most naturally to be a ‘midday’ rest, and this is the way Origen takes it.⁶¹ By contrast, Gregory understands the *meridiano* to be ‘Egypt and the parts of Africa’, where Christ was hidden from Herod in his infancy,⁶² and Tyconius, in a similar vein, takes it to be ‘the south’ where the Lord dwells and the devil attempts to invade.

⁵⁹ *Cant.* 1.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 211): *Fuscam itaque se dicebat Ecclesia propter eos, qui erant ex gentibus credituri. Erat quippe taetro idolatriae fumo et sacrificiorum busto fuscata, sed decora facta est per fidem Christi et sanctitatem spiritus, quem accepit.*

⁶⁰ 11.3.15: *quantitas simplicior; in summa enim grandis aut exigua est, sed inter has extremitates mediae sunt species, et ab ima ad summam ac retro sunt multi gradus. qualitas magis varia. nam est et candida et fusca, et plena et exilis, et lenis et aspera, et contracta et fusa, et dura et flexibilis, et clara et obtusa. spiritus etiam longior breviorque.*

⁶¹ *Hom. In Cant.* 1.8.

⁶² Gregory of Elvira, *Cant.* 2.5 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 195): *nulli quidem dubium est meridianum Aegyptum et partes Africae esse et quia illic infantia Christi detulit.*

It is not impossible that Gregory's *Tractatus* would have circulated amongst the Donatists. His ecclesiological rigorism and the fact that he refused communion with the majority of Western bishops, whom he considered to be tainted after the adoption of the Nike creed at Ariminum in 359, would have made his works attractive reading, but we simply have no evidence that the *Tractatus* circulated outside of the Iberian peninsula. Any suggestion of a direct relationship would be tenuous indeed. If Tyconius did not know Gregory's work, it is at the very least probable that they both drew upon the same source, such as the commentary of Victorinus of Poetovio.⁶³

3. Traces of Donatist Ecclesiology in the Writings of Augustine

Augustine's anti-Donatist writings lie outside the time period covered in this study, and a study of his interpretation of the *Song* in these texts would constitute a chapter in its own right.⁶⁴ He does, however, preserve a considerable amount of Donatist exegesis of the *Song* that we would not otherwise have. Given that 'proof texting' is a fairly conservative enterprise, in which theologians rely on long-established exegetical patterns, we can presume that a good deal of the evidence can be traced back before the time of Augustine's episcopate. I shall also suggest that exegesis of *Song* 1:7, which first appears in the early fifth century, may be indebted either directly to Gregory's *Tractatus* or to a shared source.

⁶³ He may well have known some of Victorinus' commentaries. Bright, *Tyconius*, pp. 25-27, has suggested that Tyconius' 'spiritual' interpretation of the Apocalypse is a direct challenge to the millenarian interpretations of Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Victorinus. But she is mistaken in referring to Victorinus of Poetovio as an African, confusing him with Marius Victorinus (cf. pp. 25, 188).

⁶⁴ Augustine's interpretation of the *Song* has, in fact, been little studied. A.M. La Bonnardière's seminal article ('Le Cantique des Cantiques dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin', *REAug* 1 ([1955], pp. 225-37) provides an invaluable catalogue of treatises in which Augustine cites the *Song*, and she offers some broad analysis of his use of the text: 'le Cantique des Cantiques est pour lui en relation étroite avec le mystère de la Baptême' (p. 225). Nathalie Henry, 'The Lily Among the Thorns: Augustine's Refutation of Donatist Exegesis of the Song of Songs', *REAug* 42 (1996), pp. 255-56, offers a brief, generally competent analysis of Augustine's anti-Donatist interpretation of particular verses of the *Song*. She rarely, however, takes the time to outline the Donatist exegesis of the texts, and she only mentions Tyconius in passing as a key source for Augustine's ecclesiology (relying solely on Frend!). She is also wrong in concluding that 'Augustine follows Origen's tradition in recognizing in the bride of the Song of Songs an élite composed of holy souls' (p. 256). There is little evidence of a direct line between Augustine's ecclesiological and Origen's psychological exegesis of the *Song*.

From his (forced) ordination as presbyter at Hippo in 391, Augustine directed a good deal of his energy towards a refutation of the theological basis of the Donatist church.⁶⁵ Although public debate served him well against the Manichees, the Donatists were not keen to engage him in a public forum. It was thus in treatises, tracts, letters, and even a song that Augustine sought to make his case. His first anti-Donatist work, composed late in 393, was the lyrical *Psalmus contra partem Donati*, in which the first letter of each stanza proceeds in alphabetical succession from *a* to *v*. It was designed for ‘very lowly people [*humillimi*], to impress upon their memory [*inhaerere memoriae*]’ a refutation of Donatism.⁶⁶ Shortly following his composition of this work, he wrote the *Contra epistulam Donati haeretici liber unus*, which is now lost, although a brief description survives in the *Retractiones*, indicating that its subject is rebaptism.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the letter of Donatus is also lost, in which, according to Augustine, he argues that the ‘baptism of Christ is believed to be nowhere except in his communion [*non nisi in eius communione*]’.⁶⁸ Augustine does not give us much indication regarding Donatus’ scriptural and theological defense of rebaptism, aside from an abbreviated citation of *Ecclesiasticus* 34.30, ‘He that is washed [*baptizatur*] by the dead [*a mortuo*], what does this cleansing [*lavatio*] benefit him?’⁶⁹ Augustine confesses, however, that he initially believed that Donatus had invented the practice of rebaptism and that he was unaware that ‘many African codices’ had the same reading of *Ecclesiasticus*, which omitted the phrase ‘and again touches him’ from the middle of the sentence; he had presumed that this, too, was an invention of Donatus.⁷⁰ Augustine wrote another now-lost work in two books entitled *Contra partem Donati* around the time of the first three books of the *De Doctrina Christiana* and the *Confessiones* (that is, around 397). The theme of this work, not of as much interest to us as his treatise against Donatus, was a repudiation of coercion by secular power against the Donatists, a position of which he

⁶⁵ On his ordination, see P.R.L. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 131-38.

⁶⁶ *Retr.* 1.20 (CCSL 57, p. 61).

⁶⁷ *Retr.* 1.21.1 (CCSL 57, pp. 62): *Librum etiam contra epistulam Donati, qui partis Donati secundus post Maiorinum episcopus apud Carthaginem fuit, eodem presbyterii mei tempore scripsi.*

⁶⁸ *Retr.* 1.21.1 (CCSL 57, p. 62).

⁶⁹ *Retr.* 1.21.3 (CCSL 57, p. 63).

⁷⁰ *Retr.* 1.21.3 (CCSL 57, p. 63).

would later repent.⁷¹ In the intervening years, Augustine would compose several shorter letters on the historical origins of the schism (*ep.* 43, c. 397) and the universality of the church (*ep.* 49, c. 398).

The years 400 and immediately following would see the production of several of Augustine's most substantial and enduring works against the Donatists, which are of particular importance for the present study. The *Contra epistulam Parmeniani*, discussed in the preceding section, is a defense of the assertion that the true 'catholic' church is to be found throughout the world, not only in Africa. It is an important source of information regarding the ecclesiology of Tyconius and his place in the Donatist church, but throughout its three books we are not given any sense of how Parmenian employed the *Song* – it is Optatus alone who preserves this. In his work against Parmenian, Augustine promises a fuller treatment 'on the question of baptism', which he delivered either later that year or early the following year under the title *De baptismo [contra Donatistas]*.⁷² In this treatise, Augustine does not have any particular opponent, offering a broad refutation of the Donatist claim that baptism exists only in the one true church: Augustine asserts that baptism exists in heresy and schism, if it is properly performed, but it only exists 'rightly [*recte*]' in the catholic communion.⁷³ Indeed, it is only in the first book of the *De baptismo* that Augustine responds to specifically Donatist arguments; books two through seven consist of a refutation of Cyprian's theology of baptism and the arguments advanced by his episcopal colleagues at the synod of September 256 at Carthage, which formed the bedrock of the Donatist theology

⁷¹ *Retr.* 2.5 (CCSL 57, p. 93): *Sunt duo libri mei quorum titulus est Contra partem Donati. Quorum in libro primo dixi non mihi placere ullius saecularis potestatis impetus schismaticos ad communionem violenter artari.* His letter to Vincentius (*ep.* 93) is his defense, in 408, of the value of coercion that was being used against the Donatists.

⁷² *C. Epist. Parm.* 2.14.32 (CSEL 51, p. 86): *Sed de questione baptismi latius aliquid, Domino adiuvante, tractabimus.* The majority of manuscripts as well as the *Retractiones* have the title *De baptismo, libri septem*. Several, however, attest *De baptismo contra Donatistas*, and, indeed, Augustine clearly states in the first line of his *retractio* on the text: *Contra Donatistas auctoritate beatissimi episcopi et martyris Cypriani se defendere molientes septem libros de baptismo scripsi* (*Retr.* 2.18 [CCSL 57, p. 104]).

⁷³ *Bapt.* 1.1.2 (CSEL 51, p. 146): *posse extra catholicam communionem dari baptismum, quemadmodum et extra eam potest et haberi*; 1.3.4 (CSEL 51, p. 148): *esse in catholica baptismum et illic tantum recte accipi...esse apud Donatistas baptismum, non autem recte accipi*; 1.4.5 (CSEL 51, p. 150): *si quis non intellegit quomodo fieri possit, ut quod ibi esse confitemur non ibi recte dari dicamus, illuc adiundat, quia nec recte ibi esse dicimus, quod et illi dicunt in his qui ab eorum communione discedunt.*

of rebaptism.⁷⁴ The *De baptismo* demonstrates not only the extent to which the Donatists relied upon Cyprian as their authority, but moreover that a dossier of his rebaptism letters continued to enjoy wide circulation into the fifth century.⁷⁵ This ensured that *Song* 6:8 and 4:12-15-13 would remain important texts in the debate. Finally, the lengthy *Epistula ad Catholicos*, written in either 401 or 402, is directed to his catholic colleagues, written soon after he had read and responded to a letter of Petilian to his Donatist colleagues;⁷⁶ indeed, Augustine seems to model the *Epistula ad Catholicos* on Petilian's letter, although instead of presenting an argument in favour of rebaptism, Augustine seeks to explore the question: 'Where is the church? Is it among us or them?'⁷⁷ The impetus for this particular topic may have been, at least in part, Petilian's (perceived) misinterpretation of the Greek term καθ' ὅλον, which Augustine insists, when applied to the church, must refer to its spread throughout the world.⁷⁸ This work provides the earliest evidence for the Donatist interpretation of *Song* 1:7 as

⁷⁴ At the outset of the work, Augustine states that it is his aim 'to undertake not only to refute those objections, which concerning this matter the Donatists are accustomed to use against us [*quae de hac re nobis Donatistae obiectare consuerunt*], but also what the Lord has given me to say concerning the authority of the most blessed martyr Cyprian, by which they attempt to prop up their perversity, lest they fall to an attack of truth [*unde suam perversitatem, ne veritatis impetu cadat, fulcire conantur*]' See also his claim in *Retr.* 2.18 (CCSL 57, p. 104): *nihil sic valere ad refellendos Donatistas et ad eorum prorsus ora claudenda...quomodo litteras factumque Cypriani*.

⁷⁵ Augustine clearly knows *ep.* 70 (5.22.30); *ep.* 71 (2.9.14; 5.22.30); *ep.* 73 (2.9.14; 3.10.13-19.25; 4.1.1-26.34); *ep.* 74 (5.23.31-28.39); *sententiae episcopi* (3.3.4-9.12; 6.1.1-7.54.103). Augustine does not mention *ep.* 72 and it would be unsurprising if he did not know this synodal letter; it rarely appears with the other rebaptism letters in the manuscripts, with the exception of Chelt and B, thus suggesting it did not circulate as part of the dossier. More curious is his silence on *ep.* 69, which seems to have circulated with the other rebaptism letters. On the manuscript tradition, see J. Chapman, 'The Order of the Treatises and Letters in the MSS of St. Cyprian', *JTS* 4/1 (1902), pp. 102-23, at pp. 113-4; and M. Bévenot, *The Tradition of Manuscripts: A Study in the Transmission of St. Cyprian's Treatises* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), pp. 4-35.

⁷⁶ There is no mention of the *Epistula ad Catholicos* in the *Retractiones*, but we can be certain that it was written between the composition of the second and third books of the *Contra litteras Petiliani* – the first book was written when Augustine had only a fragment of the letter; the second book, a less hasty reply, was written after Augustine received a copy of the entire letter (*Cont. Litt. Pet.* 2.1.1; *Retr.* 2.25), and the third is Augustine's response to Petilianus' response to the first book (*Cont. Litt. Pet.* 3.1.1; *Retr.* 2.25), which he does not seem to have read when composing the *Epistula ad Catholicos*.

⁷⁷ *Epist. ad. Cath.* 2.2 (CSEL 52, p. 232): *ubi sit ecclesia, utrum apud nos an apud illos*. Regarding his letter to the catholics, Augustine says 'If he [i.e., Petilianus] does not wish [to answer my reply], let him do for this my letter what I did for his, to which I have already responded, since he wrote to them as I to you' (1.1; CSEL 52, p. 232).

⁷⁸ *Cont. Litt. Pet.* 2.38.90; *Epist. ad. Cath.* 1.1.

limiting the true church to Africa, although the source of this exegesis is unclear (it does not occur in either of Parmenian's letters to Augustine).

During the years 405-12, Augustine would continue writing against the Donatists at a feverish pace, with the *Post conlationem contra Donatistas* marking something of the close of this vigorous phase, although he in no way remained silent on the issue afterwards. There are too many works to cover, so those in which Augustine preserves Donatist exegesis of the Song will suffice. The *Contra Cresconium*, in four books, was written in the year 405/6, against a letter of Cresconius the grammarian, who took issue with Augustine's handling of Petilian.⁷⁹ The *Song* appears but infrequently in this lengthy text, but it is an important source for the exegesis of *Song* 4:12-15. Likewise, Augustine's *Ep.* 93 to Vincentius of Cartenna, penned in 408 to defend his support of coercion by the state, provides us with another glimpse of Donatist interpretation of *Song* 1:7, which must have become quite a significant text by this time.

It is clear from Augustine's writings that *Song* 6:8 and 4:12-15 remained key Donatist proof texts for the exclusive unity of the church, interpreted after the manner of Cyprian. The only other verse from the *Song*, as far as we can discern, that occupied an important place in Donatist ecclesiology was *Song* 1:7. As noted above, Augustine's *De baptismo* provides us with clear evidence that a dossier of Cyprian's letters on rebaptism circulated throughout the fourth and into the fifth century, providing the Donatists with concrete images that demonstrated the church was one – an enclosed garden in which the waters of baptism were contained and kept from those without. The most frequently cited text of the *Song* in the *De baptismo* is *Song* 6:8, often on its own, although in several places it is joined with *Song* 4:12-15.⁸⁰ There is, however, only one instance in which Augustine attributes a particular interpretation of the *Song* to the Donatists; he is elsewhere concerned to counter Cyprian's exegesis, as a means of undermining the Donatists' leading authority. In the first book, Augustine addresses the Donatist objection – not attributed to any particular figure, but presumed to be a common point

⁷⁹ Dated on the basis of Augustine's claim in *Retr.* 2.26 that 'When I wrote these four books, the Emperor Honorius had just then [*iam*] given the laws against the Donatists [i.e., 12 Feb 405]'.

⁸⁰ Alone: *Bapt.* 1.11.15; 3.17.22; 4.3.4, 10.16, 20.27; 5.16.21, 18.24. With *Song* 4:12-15: *Bapt.* 5.27.38; 6.3.5, 29.56.

held by all – that if catholics grant that Donatist baptism remits sins, then they must possess the Holy Spirit. And if they have the Holy Spirit, then they are the sole genuine church of Christ, for ‘she is one, wherever she is, concerning which it is said: *one is my dove, the only one of her mother*.’⁸¹ But, if Donatist baptism does not remit sins, so the argument goes, then it can not be called true baptism and ought to be repeated by the catholics. This is an unremarkable piece of exegesis, clearly derived from Cyprian, but the persistence of such a use of the text ought nonetheless to be noted. Indeed, fifteen years later, when delivering his sixth tractate on *John*, Augustine again engages Donatist exegesis of *Song* 6:8, although it is not named as such.⁸²

The *De baptismo* may also have something else to tell us about the intertextual relationship between *Song* 6:8 and *Eph* 5:27 as well as the form of *Song* 4:12-15. It is notable that in a number of places where Augustine cites or paraphrases *Song* 6:8, it is joined to *Eph* 5:27, ‘a church without spot or wrinkle’. In 4.3.4, Augustine writes: ‘*one is my dove, the only of her mother*; for she is *without spot or wrinkle*’. Again, in 4.10.16: ‘It is therefore asked in what way men who belong to the devil [*ex parte diaboli*] are able to belong to the church that does not have any *spot or wrinkle* of any kind, concerning which it is written: *one is my dove*’. And again in 6.3.5: ‘She is *one dove* [*unica columba*], chaste and spotless, a bride *without spot or wrinkle* [*sine macula aut ruga*], a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed, a paradise with the fruit of orchards, etc.’. Augustine uses these citations to demonstrate one of his major arguments, which runs throughout the *De baptismo*: The one dove, who is without spot or wrinkle, cannot be the *visible* church – either Donatist or catholic – for in both there are those who are tainted with sin, but rather it must be the hidden, true church; likewise, the enclosed garden cannot be the *visible* church, which has sinners of all kinds within its bound, but again must be the hidden church. Therefore, these texts cannot be employed to argue that baptism must exist either with the catholics or Donatists, but not both, because neither is strictly synonymous with the hidden church. It is possible that, to underscore his point regarding the contradictory position held by the Donatists on baptism (namely,

⁸¹ *Bapt.* 1.11.15 (CSEL 51, p. 160): *una est enim, quaecumque illa sit de qua dictum est: una est columba mea, una est matri suae.*

⁸² *Tr. In Jo.* 6.11.

that they reject schismatic/heretical baptism because it is administered by those who are sinful, but they ignore the possibility that sinful men could be administering it in their own communion), Augustine has innovated in linking *Song* 6:8 and *Eph* 5:27 together. But it seems more likely that Augustine is simply repeating a formula of the Donatists, concerned as they were with ritual purity, which emphasized the spotless character of the true church, and he seized upon this as a glaring point of contradiction.⁸³

It is also notable that Augustine always follows Cyprian's 'rearranged' form of *Song* 4:12-15, the order of which is vv. 12-15-13, although v. 13 is not always appended to the end of citation.⁸⁴ This is the case both in the *De baptismo* and the *Contra Cresconium*, the two treatises where we find numerous citations of the passage. There is some flexibility with the form of the text. In *De baptismo* 5.27.38 the form is: *ipse est hortus conclusus, fons signatus, puteus aquae vivae, paradisus cum fructu pomorum*, whereas in *Contra Cresconium* 2.14.17, he omits the final clause: *hortus conclusus, fons signatus, puteus aquae vivae*. But Augustine never cites the text in any other form (i.e., with v. 13 following v. 12 directly). Again, the weight of Cyprian's influence can be felt since, throughout North Africa, his rearrangement and abbreviation of *Song* 4:12-15 has, in a sense, become 'canonical'.

Augustine also preserves, in writings from the first decade of the fifth century, a piece of Donatist exegesis of the *Song* for which we have little earlier evidence. In the *Epistula ad Catholicos*, Augustine writes: 'They say that it is written in the *Song[s]* of *Songs* that the bride, that is the church, says to her husband: *Tell me, whom my soul loves, where you pasture, where you rest in the midday [in meridiem]*. This is the unique testimony which they judge rests in their favour, because Africa is found in the southern part of the world [*in meridiana orbis parte*]'.⁸⁵ *Song* 1:7 is here used as clear justification for the Donatist claim that the true church exists only in Africa. Y. Congar asserts that this exegetical move originated with Petilian, but that claim is difficult to

⁸³ *Eph* 5:27, with two exceptions (1.17.26; 5.14.35), is always joined in the *De baptismo* either to a direct citation of Cant 6:8 or a reference to the church as *columba*. See 3.18.23; 4.3.4, 4.5, 10.16; 5.16.21, 27.38; 6.3.5, 10.19, 51.99.

⁸⁴ See Cyprian, *epp.* 69.2.1 (vv. 12, 15); 74.11.2 (vv. 12, 15, 13).

⁸⁵ *Epist. ad Cath.* 16.40 (CSEL 52, p. 284).

substantiate.⁸⁶ The letters of Petilian reproduced by Augustine in the three books of the *Contra litteras Petiliani* make no use of this text, and the *Epistula ad Catholicos* was written in the style of Petilian's letter, but directed at a general audience. Later in the *Epistula*, Augustine makes the telling claim: 'For you are accustomed [*soletis*] to say: *where you pasture, where you rest in the midday*; you see what it is and that it is not in your favour'.⁸⁷ The *soletis dicere* demonstrates that this must have been something of a constant refrain in Donatist circles of Augustine's time. Indeed, it seems to be so pervasive that it was known and used by the small community of Rogatists in Cartenna, a town on the northern coast of Mauretania Caesariensis, whose bishop Rogatus had broken away from the Donatist church in the 360s, when the Circumcellions turned to violence against Romanus, the *comes Africae*.⁸⁸ But it is a mocking tone that Augustine adopts, for the Rogatists, in the West in Mauretania, have no claim to be 'the south': 'How much less ought we listen to the Rogatists, I ask you, who will not even try to demonstrate how scripture supports them when it says: *Where you pasture, where you rest at midday*... In what way can Mauretania Caesariensis boast on account of the phrase *meridie*, when it does not even wish to be called Africa, being more to the West than to the South?'⁸⁹

It is difficult to pin down precisely the origins of this exegesis. Its earliest extant mention is in 405/6, in the *Epistula ad Catholicos*, but its popularity and wide diffusion, as demonstrated above from Augustine's writings, suggest its provenance must be rather earlier. It is altogether possible that this interpretation was adopted from Tyconius' figural exegesis in the *Liber Regularum*. In the seventh rule, he had employed *Song* 1:7 in a series of texts that demonstrate that the Lord dwells in the south and the devil in the north, which would have suited mainline Donatist sensibilities quite well. Tyconius,

⁸⁶ Y. Congar (introduction and notes), *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin: Traités Anti-Donatistes I* (de Brouwer, 1963), p. 618, n.1.

⁸⁷ *Epist. ad. Cath.* 24.69 (CSEL 52, p. 315): *nam quod dicere soletis: ubi pascis, ubi cubas in meridie, vides quale sit et quam pro te non sit.*

⁸⁸ See Frend, *Donatist Church*, p. 197.

⁸⁹ *Ep.* 93.24 (PL 33:333): *quanto minus, rogo te, Rogatistas audire debemus, qui nec illud pro se interpretari conabuntur quod scriptum est: Ubi pascis, ubi cubas in meridie...Mauritania tamen Caesariensis, occidentali quam meridiana parti vicinior, quando nec Africam se vult dici, quomodo de meridie gloriabitur.*

rather ironically, may well have provided a key text to his fellow Donatists in support of an ecclesiological point on which he strongly disagreed. Gregory of Elvira's *Tractatus de Epithalamio* again, however, provides us with an interesting perspective. He interprets the *meridiano* as the *meridianum Aegyptum et partes Africae*, a blunt statement of obvious value to the Donatists. Direct influence could be possible, but, as noted above, we have no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Gregory's works were known in Africa. What is perhaps more relevant is Gregory's emphatically confident claim that *nulli quidem dubium est meridianum Aegyptum et partes Africae*; he makes no such claim about any other interpretation in the *Tractatus*. Why, then, might Gregory have had 'no doubt' about this identification? It is likely that he is here drawing on earlier sources or traditions – the link with Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt with Jesus is perhaps significant – that made this connection, and which could well have served as the basis for Donatist exegesis of this passage as well.

The Donatist exegesis of the *Song* preserved by Augustine demonstrates a continuing reliance upon Cyprian for the scriptural justification for the practice of rebaptism, which brought several key texts from the *Song* to the foreground. The introduction of *Song* 1:7 as an important text, however, suggests that both the Donatists and Gregory of Elvira may have been reliant upon a common source or sources for their interpretation of the *Song*.

4. Conclusion

We are indebted to Optatus of Milevis for our earliest comprehensive account of Donatist ecclesiology and the catholic response. It emerges quite clearly that images from the *Song* (6:8 and 4:12-15) demonstrating the firm boundaries of the one church, in which the sealed font of baptism is enclosed, which were adduced by Cyprian were adopted by the Donatists to justify their practice of rebaptism. From Augustine's comprehensive defense of the catholic position in the *De baptismo*, we can see clear evidence that a dossier of Cyprian's rebaptism letters had been circulating quite widely throughout the fourth century. His words had attained something of a canonical status

throughout North Africa, and even Augustine, so resistant to Cyprian's claims on rebaptism, will only ever cite *Song* 4:12-15 in the 'rearranged' form in which it appears in the letters to Magnus and Pompeius. Optatus, Parmenian and Tyconius all introduced passages from the *Song* into their writings that had not been cited by Cyprian. Optatus adduces *Song* 4:8 in support of obedience to the State, Parmenian *Song* 7:2 as the altar, which is the sixth 'gift' of the church, and Tyconius *Song* 1:5 and 1:7 in support of his doctrine of the 'bipartite' church. The theological points discerned in the *Song* by these three very different authors are divergent, indeed, but in every instance the interpretation is exclusively ecclesiological. They use the *Song* to construct the boundaries of the church and to offer an account of the community that exists within the garden enclosed. With Tyconius, however, who cited *Song* 1:5 and 1:7 to demonstrate the *temporarily* bipartite nature of the church, we approach something akin to the eschatological elements in Gregory of Elvira (and possible Victorinus) for whom the *Song* witnessed not only the coming of Christ and subsequent formation of the community of his body, but also the second coming of Christ, which follows the Winter of tribulation and brings about the Spring of resurrection and restoration. It should also be noted that as Cyprian did not focus upon the nuptial aspect of the *Song*, so too did subsequent North African Christians shy away from the eroticism of the poem.

II. PACIAN OF BARCELONA

Pacian of Barcelona is another shadowy figure, whose extant anti-Novatianist writings give us a sense of the diffusion and influence of Cyprian's letters on rebaptism in late fourth-century Spain. He is not, however, interested in Cyprian's views on baptism, but rather on the evils of schism and heresy. The *Song of Songs* appears in Pacian's writings, albeit infrequently, to demonstrate the unicity of the Church, properly called 'catholic', against the claims to ritual purity and moral superiority of breakaway groups, such as the Novatianist group represented by Simpronian, his interlocutor.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Pacian makes the memorable and pithy claim that 'my name is Christian, but my surname is Catholic [*christiano mihi nomen est, catholico vero cognomen*]' (SC 410, p. 174).

Simpronian, too, was influenced by Cyprian's exegesis of the *Song*. Although Cyprian had initially invoked the *Song* to dispute the validity of Novatianist baptism, his interpretation of the *Song* later proved congenial to Novatianist ecclesiological rigorism. He uses, for instance, the image of the one, perfect dove to uphold the purity of the Church and to deny the efficacy of penitential discipline for those who lapsed into sin after baptism.⁹¹

The only contemporary source we have concerning Pacian is Jerome, but his entry in the *De viris illustribus* is vague indeed: 'Pacian, bishop of Barcelona in the Pyrenees mountains, with controlled eloquence and a life as distinguished as his speech, wrote various little works, among which are *The Deer* and *Against the Novatians*, and he died during the reign of Emperor Theodosius in extreme old age'.⁹² The praise of Pacian as being *tam vita quam sermone clarus* is a stock phrase, not necessitating any real knowledge of the man, and Jerome seems to know only a fraction of his works, perhaps in name only. And Jerome places his death in a range of 13 years, between the accession of Theodosius in 379 and the composition of the *De viris illustribus* in 392. Since Pacian died in *ultima senectute*, his birth can be placed around the turn of the fourth century, but not with any further precision. In terms of the start of his episcopacy, we know from the subscriptions of the letter from the council of Serdica to Julius of Rome that Praetextatus was bishop of Barcelona in 343, so it must be after this date.⁹³ We can, therefore, say with absolute certainty that Pacian was bishop of Barcelona during the 370s and at least part of the 380s, with his tenure stretching as far back as perhaps the 350s. He also has a son, Nummius Aemilianus Dexter, who is the author of a work entitled the *Universal History* [*Omnimodam historiam*].⁹⁴

Five works of Pacian have come down to us – two letters to Simpronian the Novatianist, *Contra tractatus Novatianorum* to Simpronian, *De paenitentibus*, and *De baptismo*. The three works to Simpronian and the *De paenitentibus* all deal with the

⁹¹ See *Tractatus contra Novatianorum* (SC 410, p. 256).

⁹² *De Vir. Ill.* (PL 23:703A-B): *Pacianus, in Pyrinaei iugis Barcelonae episcopus, castigatae eloquentiae et tam vita quam sermone clarus, scripsit varia opuscula, de quibus est Cervus et Contra Novatianos, et sub Theodosio principe iam ultima senectute mortuus est.*

⁹³ *FH* 1.4.5 (Wickham, p. 52; Feder B II 2,5).

⁹⁴ *De Vir. Ill.* 132 (PL 23:715A). On Dexter, see Appendix Three.

themes of sin and penance, with the former being framed explicitly to refute the Novatianist insistence upon the absolute purity of the Christian community, in which those stained with post-baptismal sin can have no place. The *De baptismo* likely served as one in a series of catechetical lectures, beginning ‘I wish to show in what way we are born in baptism and in what way we are renewed’.⁹⁵ In this homily, Pacian develops the doctrine that children inherit sin from their parents, through the process of generation, with all humanity bound in servitude to Satan as a result. It is only by passing through the waters of baptism and being reborn through the union of Christ and the church that each one can be cleansed from the stain of sin.

It is perhaps no accident that these related treatises of Pacian are all that have survived. They may have circulated as a collection of writings bound together by the theme of sin and penitence. There are, indeed, only three complete manuscripts of Pacian’s work – *R* (*Reginensis Latinus* 331, 9th c.); *G* (*Gratianopolitanus* 262, 12th c.); and *P* (*Parisinus latinus* 2182, 13th c.) – with *R* serving as the archetype for both *G* and *P*.⁹⁶ The extant treatises thus seem to reflect one particular collection of Pacian’s writings in circulation, with other collections, which might have included the *Cervus* mentioned by Jerome, having since been lost. The manuscripts do not all list the treatises in the same order, but the three anti-Novatianist texts are always grouped together as are the *De paenitentibus* and the *De baptismo*.⁹⁷

1. The Correspondence with Simpronian

During his tenure as bishop of Barcelona, Pacian exchanged several letters with Simpronian, an otherwise unknown Novatianist. He appears to have been a well-educated layperson, but little more than this is known of his status.⁹⁸ Villoslada has

⁹⁵ *Bapt.* 1.1 (SC 410, 148): *Aperire desidero qualiter in baptismo nascamur et qualiter innovemur.*

⁹⁶ For a description of the manuscripts, see Granado, ‘Introduction’, pp. 99-104.

⁹⁷ In *R*, the *De paenitentibus* and the *De baptismo* are followed by the two letters to Simpronian and the *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum*. Both *G* and *P* begin with the letters, followed by the *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum*, and then the treatises on baptism and penitents.

⁹⁸ On several occasions in the *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum*, Pacian makes reference to Simpronian’s critique of episcopal authority, and once chastises him for ignorance although he is attempting to instruct a

suggested that the correspondence dates to 380 or 381, following the edict of 27 February 380 of Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius, *cunctos populos* (*Cod. Th.* 16.1.2), which defined orthodoxy as the faith espoused by Pope Damasus of Rome and Bishop Peter of Alexandria, allowing those in communion with them alone to use the name ‘catholic Christians’. The rest are designated as ‘heretics’, who are subject to imperial punishment.⁹⁹ Simpronian’s first letter to Pacian is on the subject of the catholic name – both regarding the virtue of those who claim it and why it ought to be used at all, since the apostles did not sanction it, leading to the belief that the correspondence must be related to the new edict.¹⁰⁰ But such a hypothesis thoroughly misunderstands the nature of the edict, which Theodosius published in Constantinople and meant to be limited to that city, as R. Malcolm Errington has persuasively shown.¹⁰¹ The administration of the Empire was firmly divided between East and West following the death of Jovian in 364, and edicts continued to be issued in the names of all ruling emperors to uphold ‘the idea that the empire was a single governmental and jurisdictional unit’.¹⁰² There is no *a priori* reason why the correspondence could not date to the 380s, but there is nothing further to support that hypothesis, either.

It was Simpronian who initiated contact, writing a letter to Pacian asking him to justify his use of the name *catholicus* and pressing him to explain the church’s position

bishop [*qui episcopum doces*] (11.6). His classical training can rival that of Cyprian (cf. *Ep.* 2.4.1). Pacian frequently refers to him as *frater*, but on several occasions also calls him *domine* (*Ep.* 1.1.1, 4). A misprint in the second edition of the text by Marguerin de Bigne (1589) saw the *domine carissime* of *Ep.* 1.1.4 changed to *domine clarissime*, suggesting senatorial rank. The reading of *R* is, however, clearly *domine carissime*. He is, however, clearly of a station that allows him to have at his disposal a servant who can deliver a letter to Pacian and remain there while he composes his reply (*Ep.* 1.7.1). On the use of letter-carriers in late antique networks, see C. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 31–40.

⁹⁹ R. C. Villoslada, *Historia de la Iglesia en Espana* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1979), p. 297.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 1.1.1; 3.1; 4.1. The title of the letter in the manuscripts is *Epistula Paciani episcopi ad Simprotianum novatianum de catholico nomine*.

¹⁰¹ R.M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 218: ‘Despite the imperial rhetoric of its preamble, which has led to much misunderstanding in modern times, it had a strictly limited function: it was directed explicitly to the people of Constantinople and aimed at putting control of the church of Constantinople into the hands of a bishop whom Theodosius and his Western advisers could accept as representing the Western majority position on the main trinitarian question.’

¹⁰² Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy*, p. 1.

on penance for post-baptismal sin.¹⁰³ Pacian composed a hasty reply, now extant as his *Epistula Prima*, in which he tells Simpronian that no complete answer is possible. For, he says, the Novatianist insistence upon the absolute purity of the church, which cannot permit of any penance whatsoever, is in agreement with the Phyrigians (i.e., the Montanists), who themselves are indebted to so many other ‘heretics’ that to overthrow them would be to ‘cut off the heads of the Lernean hydra’.¹⁰⁴ He then goes on to explain that in terms of names, one must discern if they come from God or man: ‘The Novatians, I hear, are called after Novatus or Novatian. But it is not the name, but the sect, that I accuse in them’.¹⁰⁵ The fact that the Novatianists are called after Novatian demonstrates that they have not Christ, but a man, as their head, and are thus separated from the communion of Christ’s body. Since so many heretical groups sprang up in the era after the apostles, a name was needed to distinguish ‘the unity of the uncorrupted people’.¹⁰⁶ Pacian argues for the appropriateness of the term ‘catholic’ by giving two interpretations from the Greek: ‘everywhere [*ubique*]’ and ‘obedience to all the commandments of God [*oboedientia omnium mandatorum Dei*]’.¹⁰⁷ It thus refers to their spread to every corner of the world and to their complete obedience to the commands of God. As for penance, Pacian lists a lengthy catalogue of Old Testament and New Testament texts that demonstrate the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord, focusing in particular on the messages of warning at the start of the Apocalypse, which demonstrate that entire churches could become wayward and stand in need of patient correction.¹⁰⁸

Pacian’s reply settled nothing for Simpronian, who in response composed his own treatise against penance, which he prefaced with a covering letter.¹⁰⁹ He felt stung by Pacian’s reply, which he perceived was ‘sprinkled with gall’ and associated him with

¹⁰³ *Ep.* 1.1.1 (SC 410, p. 166): ‘If it is not a carnal intention, but, as I judge, a spiritual calling, lord, that you enquire from us the true and catholic faith’; 3.1 (SC 410, p. 170): ‘But, you will say, under the apostles no one was called catholic’; 5.1 (SC 410, p. 176): ‘Concerning penitence, may God grant that it is necessary for none of the faithful...But we say that this indulgence of God is for the miserable, not the happy, neither is it before sin, but after’.

¹⁰⁴ *Ep.* 1.1.4 (SC 410, p. 168).

¹⁰⁵ *Ep.* 1.3.1 (SC 410, p. 170).

¹⁰⁶ *Ep.* 1.3.1 (SC 410, p. 172).

¹⁰⁷ *Ep.* 1.4.1 (SC 410, p. 174).

¹⁰⁸ *Ep.* 1.5.1-11.

¹⁰⁹ *Ep.* 2.1.3 (SC 410, p. 186): *accipe pauca de litteris tuis, quas tractatui praetulisti*.

heresies ‘no one had mentioned’.¹¹⁰ The covering-letter seems to comprise a series of roughly connected attacks both on Pacian and the ‘catholics’. He takes aim at Pacian’s reference to a line of Virgil, which Pacian cleverly turns back on him for both recognizing and citing himself in proper metre.¹¹¹ Also, taking a line that will be familiar from the Donatist controversy in North Africa, Simpronian criticizes the catholics for being on the side of imperial power, immune from persecution – implying that marginalized groups, which have become the targets of imperial legislation, are much closer to the primitive church than the ‘catholic’ church. It is in the treatise itself that Simpronian returns to the question of sin and penance, and he appears to have been unmoved by Pacian’s initial arguments. We can reconstruct much of his argument through quotations preserved in the *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum*, but for the sake of time it will suffice to reproduce Pacian’s brief but incisive summary of Simpronian’s treatise: ‘Penitence is not permitted after baptism, the church is not able to forgive mortal sin, and the church perishes in receiving sinners’.¹¹² Simpronian adduces a series of images and texts from scripture that support his doctrine of the spotless purity of the church: ‘The church is the people reborn from water and the Holy Spirit (cf. *John* 3:5), without denial of the name of Christ (cf. *Matt* 10:33; *Luke* 12:9); the temple and house of God (cf. *1 Cor* 3:16; *1 Tim* 3:15); the column and pillar of truth (*1 Tim* 3:15); a holy virgin with most chaste senses (cf. *2 Cor* 11:2); the bride of Christ from his bones and flesh (*Eph* 5:30); not having spot or wrinkle (*Eph* 5:27); guarding the whole law of the gospels’.¹¹³ Perhaps chief among these is *Eph* 5:27 – *sine macula aut ruga* – a text which posed a particular problem to Tyconius in elaborating his doctrine of the bipartite church.

Pacian replied in turn, composing a treatise (the *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum*) on sin and penance, to which he appended a brief covering-letter (*Epistula Secunda*) briefly addressing the attacks in Simpronian’s second letter. Pacian responds with a

¹¹⁰ *Ep.* 2.1.2 (SC 410, p. 186).

¹¹¹ *Ep.* 2.4.1.

¹¹² *Tract.* 1.1 (SC 410, p. 206): *quod post baptismum paenitere non liceat; quod mortale peccatum ecclesia donare non possit: immo quod ipsa pereat recipiendo peccantes.*

¹¹³ *Tract.* 2.3 (SC 410, p. 210).

defense of catholic unity, refuting Simpronian's appropriation of the aforementioned texts. Against Simpronian's church of the pure, Pacian gives an account of a church rich in diversity, in which those of different abilities and merits may find mercy and rest. The church is, Pacian concurs, a community of those 'reborn from water and Holy Spirit', but only those bishops in apostolic succession can claim to possess the Spirit.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the church is a temple and the body of Christ, but these are composed of diverse materials and members, in which there is not uniformity, but diversity.¹¹⁵ Pacian emphasizes that the church is not only a chaste bride but also a fecund mother: the paucity of the Novatianists, especially compared with the ubiquity of the catholic church, demonstrates their separation from the true source of life.¹¹⁶ Indeed, Pacian is able, rather cleverly, to turn *Eph* 5:27 to his favour: '*The church is without spot or wrinkle*. That is, it does not have heresies, it does not have Valentinians, Cataphrygians, or Novatians...The sinner and the penitent are not a spot on the church, since as long as he sins and is not penitent, he is placed without the church [*quia quamdiu peccat et non paenitet, extra ecclesiam constitutus est*]...But the heretic rends, kills, corrupts, and wrinkles the church [*scindit, intercipit, vitiat, inrugat*]'.¹¹⁷ Pacian's theology of penance is much more generous than that of Cyprian, but his ecclesiology is in stark continuity: it is heresy and schism – deviance from doctrinal and sacramental unity – which constitute the arch-crime.

Indeed, Cyprian serves as a clear authority for Pacian. He calls him the 'most blessed martyr and doctor', placing him alongside the 'apostles and the primitive priests',¹¹⁸ his epistles 'please' him,¹¹⁹ his sanctity is so inviolate that not even Simpronian can disparage him.¹²⁰ It is, perhaps, unsurprising that Pacian should invoke the authority of Cyprian against the Novatianists. But Simpronian, too, knows and cites

¹¹⁴ *Tract.* 3.1 (SC 410, p. 210): *Age, quis mihi fontem Dei clusit? Quis Spiritum rapuit? Quin immo apud nos aqua viva est ipsa quae salvit a Christo: tu a fonte perpetuo separatus, unde generaris?*

¹¹⁵ *Tract.* 4.1-2 (SC 410, p. 214): *corpus multis in unum partibus membrisque collectum...Templum certe amplificum, domus magna, habens quidem vasa aurea et argentea.*

¹¹⁶ *Tract.* 4.3-4 (SC 410, pp. 214-16): *multis igitur huic virgini partus et proles innumera.*

¹¹⁷ *Tract.* 4.5 (SC 410, p. 216).

¹¹⁸ *Ep.* 1.3.4 (SC 410, p. 172): *parva nobis de apostolicis viris, parva de primis sacerdotibus, parva de beatissimo Cypriano martyre atque doctore currit auctoritas?*

¹¹⁹ *Ep.* 2.7.1.

¹²⁰ *Tract.* 5.3.

Cyprian's writings: 'For you set the most blessed Cyprian as a witness against me, since in the letter *On the Lapsed* he says that Moses, Daniel, and Job prayed for sinners, but did not obtain it'.¹²¹ Cyprian's call to unity and his high view of the bishop served Pacian well, but his ecclesiological rigorism appealed to Simpronian.

2. The *Song of Songs* in Pacian's Writings

Both Pacian and Simpronian relied upon images from the *Song* to articulate their ecclesiologies, and the influence of Cyprian upon both is clear. In the *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum*, Pacian agrees with Simpronian's application of images from *Song* 4:12-15 and 6:8 to the church: 'We, however, understand, as you reproached us, that the church of God is a *dove* (*Song* 6:8) [*ecclesiam Dei columbam*] not bitter with gall, not fierce with the tearing of claws, shining white with small and scanty plumage. We also know that the *stream of living water* (4:15) [*puteum aquae vivae*] and *sealed fountain* (4:12) [*fontem signatum*] is in no way made unclean by the stain of the heretics, and that the *garden enclosed* (4:12) [*hortumque conclusum*] is filled with plants both big and small, both cheap and precious [*plenum oleribus magnis pariter et parvis, vilibus atque pretiosis*].'¹²² Simpronian is likely directly reliant on Cyprian's letter to Magnus, which is the only letter that combines both *Song* 6:8 and 4:12-15; this is rather ironic, because Cyprian wrote this letter specifically to deny the efficacy of Novatian's baptism. Nevertheless, these simple and straightforward, yet striking, images would have demonstrated for Simpronian the clear, firm dividing lines between the church and the world. Inside this well-enclosed garden, there could be no place for the weak, worldly, and impure. Simpronian, moreover, may have used the dove not so much as evidence of the church's unicity but of its peace, which he perceived was violated by the cooperation between bishops and the imperial authorities. Pacian, however, focuses less on the boundaries and more on the character of the garden within, elaborating the horticultural metaphor in a way that had not been hitherto done. A garden, he quite rightly points out,

¹²¹ *Tract.* 22.3 (SC 410, p. 260): *Nam quod Cyprianum beatissimum mihi pro contrario teste proponis, quia in epistula quae De lapsis Moyses et Daniele et Iob orasse pro peccatoribus dicat, nec impetrasse.*

¹²² *Tract.* 21.4 (SC 410, p. 256).

does not usually have only one type of plant, with each individual one grown to the same size. There is diversity of the type, size, and value of the plants within the garden, and the church likewise has room for Christians of different sorts and merits. He also takes the *fons signatus* in a somewhat different way. Rather than emphasize its inaccessibility to those outside, he takes the fact that the fountain is sealed to demonstrate the impossibility of its being defiled.

Pacian elsewhere in his correspondence with Simpronian cites *Song* 6:7-8 four times. He has, however, modified *Song* 6:7 to suit his theological argument. The verse speaks of ‘sixty queens, eighty concubines, and young women without number [*sexaginta regina et octoginta concubinae et adolescentularum non est numerus*]’, who praise the bride. Pacian only cites the latter portion of the verse, inserting *mater* at the start, so that the bride becomes the mother of the young women without number.¹²³ Significantly, in each instance, it is linked with a citation from *Psalms* 44 (either vv. 10 or 15).¹²⁴ *Contra Tractatus Novatianorum* 2.4 can give us a sense of the relationship of the two texts. After listing in 2.3 a series of biblical texts that Simpronian has adduced to prove the need for the church to keep itself free from any stain of sin, Pacian adds several of his own to demonstrate the opposite: ‘Which one of us denies this? But we also add: *a queen in gold and multi-coloured clothing (Ps 44:10); a fecund vine on the walls of the Lord’s house (Ps 127:3); a mother of young women, who are beyond counting; the one and beautiful dove, chosen of her mother, and perfect (Song 6:7-8), she herself is the mother of all*’.¹²⁵ Pacian again cites these two texts to demonstrate that not all those in the church are of equal merit: ‘Therefore, you see that the church is the *queen in gold and multi-coloured clothing (Ps 44:10), made up of a variety of many bodies and of many people [multorum utique corporum multorumque populorum varietate compositam]*...She is also *a fecund and flowering vine (Ps 127:3), having many vines....She is also a mother of young women, who are beyond counting*.

¹²³ *Ep.* 1.4.4; *Tract.* 25.4.

¹²⁴ *Ep.* 1.3.1, 4.3-4; *Tract.* 2.4; 25.4.

¹²⁵ *Tract.* 2.4 (SC 410, p. 210): *Quis hoc nostrum negat? Quin etiam addimus, ecclesiam esse reginam in veste aurata et variegata; foecundam vitem in lateribus domus Domini; matrem adolescentularum, quarum non est numerus: unam speciosam columbam, electam matris suae, atque perfectam, ipsam omnium matrem.*

Calculate, if you can, the catholic flocks, and count on your fingers the crowds of our people [*Calcolare denique, si potes, catholicos greges, et duc in digitos nostrae plebis examina*].¹²⁶ It is the fecundity of the church that Pacian chooses to emphasize, a key characteristic that would set the catholics apart from the dwindling Novatianists. Cyprian, in his letter to Pompeius, had used the image of the church as fertile mother, birthing children to God in baptism, to contest Pope Stephen's claim that heretical baptism was efficacious.¹²⁷ He did not, however, employ the *Song* in his brief articulation of a nuptial theology, although he cited *Song* 4:12-15 later in the epistle. Pacian, by contrast, brings the *Song* into the ambit of nuptial theology, linking it with *Ps* 44:10. References to the *queen* and the *dove* are paired elsewhere in the correspondence with Simpronian: 'When after the apostles heresies appeared, which with diverse names laboured to tear and divide into parts the *dove* and *queen* of God'.¹²⁸ There is one further example, from the *epistula prima*, in which Simpronian interweaves citations from the *Song* and the *Psalms* to demonstrate that to be *catholicus* is to be *ubique unum*: 'But if to be catholic is to be one everywhere, as the elders thought, David himself shows the same thing saying: *The queen stands in gold and multi-coloured clothing* (*Ps* 44:10), that is, one in all. And in the *Song of Songs* the bridegroom says: *One is my dove, my perfect one, she is one to her mother, chosen by the one who bore her* (*Song* 6:8). And again: *the virgins will be brought to the king after her* (*Ps* 44:15). And again: *the young women, who are beyond counting* (*Song* 6:7). Therefore, she is one in all and one over all'.¹²⁹ Pacian's vision of the unicity of the church is grounded in its fecundity and diversity, which explains why *Song* 6:7, a text not cited by Cyprian, has become as important to him as *Song* 6:8, and why these texts are linked with *Ps* 44 vv. 10 and 15.

3. Conclusions

¹²⁶ *Tract.* 25.1-3 (SC 410, p. 264).

¹²⁷ *ep.* 74.7.2.

¹²⁸ *Ep.* 1.3.1 (SC 410, pp. 170-2).

¹²⁹ *Ep.* 1.4.3-4 (SC 410, p. 174): *Sed et si catholicus ubique unum est, sicut superiores putant, idipsum David indicat dicens: Adstitit regina in veste aurata et varietata, hoc est, una in omnibus. Et in Cantico Canticorum sponsus haec loquitur: Una est columba mea, perfecta mea, una est matri suae, electa est genitrici suae. Et iterum: Adducentur regi virgines post eam. Et adhuc: Adulescentulae, quarum non est numerus. Ergo in omnibus una, et una super omnia.*

Pacian's writings against the Novatian Simpronian demonstrate the continuing influence of Cyprian's interpretation of the *Song* over a century later, and as far afield as the north of Spain. His rebaptism dossier, moreover, seems to have had wide appeal: both the extreme rigorist Simpronian, for whom there could be no place for sin or sinners within the church, and the more lax Pacian, who envisioned the church as a community of forgiveness and mercy, found strong support for their ecclesiologies therein. Unlike Optatus and the majority of the Donatists, but more in the vein of Tyconius (and, later, Augustine), Pacian cites the *Song* not to establish the boundaries of the church or to speculate on the fate of those without, but rather to articulate a vision of the life and character of the church within. His exegesis of the *Song*, moreover, differs in one fundamental way from his North African counterparts – he brings the poem to bear on his nuptial theology, citing *Song* 6:8 alongside *Psalms* 44:10, 15. Victorinus of Poetovio and Reticus of Autun, as we saw in the previous chapter, focused upon the nuptial aspect of the *Song*, but outside of their writings, and one or both may have influenced Pacian. Gregory of Elvira, Pacian's contemporary, elaborates at length on this theme in his *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, focusing on Christ's generative union with a human soul and flesh in the Incarnation, which is continually embodied in his union with the church; it is possible that Pacian knew Gregory's *Tractatus*. Pacian's writings also reveal the beginning of a trend of reading the Song of Songs and Psalm 44 intertextually, which will be taken up at some length by Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. For Ambrose and Jerome, however, it is the virgins of v. 15 who are particularly of issue, in elaborating their understanding of the place of literal, celibate virgins in the larger community of the church.¹³⁰ But for Pacian, as for Gregory, it is only the corporate church, as bride and mother, which participates in this union with Christ. Individual believers are not to re-enact this on an individual level, being rather the children, who are begotten by the loving and fecund union of Christ and his church.¹³¹

¹³⁰ On the relationship between Psalm 44 and the Song, see D.G. Hunter, 'The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine', *Church History* 69/2 (2000): pp. 281-303.

¹³¹ See also Pacian, *Bapt.* 6.1-4.

PART TWO

GREGORY AND THE PROBLEM OF ORIGEN'S INFLUENCE IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

The aim of the second part of the dissertation is to engage with some of the key problems in Gregorian scholarship that pertain to the study of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. Despite the paucity of modern scholarship on Gregory of Elvira, the problems that have arisen are not few, and nearly all are related in some way to the apparent influence of Origen. From a text-critical perspective, several passages in both the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* and the *Tractatus Origenis* – Gregory's two most significant exegetical works – are clearly dependent upon translations of Origen by Jerome and Rufinus. The most intractable are those passages that display verbatim agreement with Rufinus' translation of the *Homilies on Genesis*, since it is unlikely that Gregory was alive in the early fifth century to read the work. There are also a very few instances where Gregory seems to be reliant on fragments of Origen and Hippolytus that appear never to have been translated into Latin – and yet it seems unlikely that Gregory knew Greek well and even more unlikely that he would have had access to the Alexandrian's voluminous works. From a theological perspective, Gregory's hermeneutics have been identified as thoroughly Origenian by some of the most venerable scholars of patristic exegesis, and it has been posited that he had read and absorbed the *De Principiis*. But this broader, more conceptual, engagement with Origen is not easier to explain. Gregory, as far as we can ascertain, became bishop in the late 340s/early 350s and would have engaged in a lengthy preaching career long before the earliest known translations of Origen became available.

Gregory's apparent reliance upon Origen has led scholars to extend the length of his life and tenure as bishop beyond what is plausible; to posit an equally implausible gap of at least thirty years between the composition of the *De Fide* and all of the extant exegetical writings; to doubt whether Gregory is even the author of certain works now attributed to him, most notably the *Tractatus Origenis*; and to read his homilies as a transposition of Origenian exegesis and theology into a rigorist, anti-Arian mode.

In the following two chapters, I shall provide evidence that, in spite of appearances, Gregory did not have direct knowledge of Origen's works, either in Greek or the Latin translations of Jerome and Rufinus. In consequence of this, I shall argue that there is no need to extend Gregory's episcopacy into the fifth century, that his exegetical works were likely composed over a period of time between c. 350-80, and that the early Latin exegetical tradition provides the proper background against which his homilies – particularly on the *Song of Songs* – should be read. Indeed, not only does earlier Latin exegesis of the *Song*, surveyed in Part One, illuminate Gregory's *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, but his interpretation of the text can also shed light on the largely fragmentary tradition that preceded him. In the third chapter, we will consider the specific text-critical problems in the *Tractatus Origenis* and the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, in the context of the extant manuscript evidence and modern scholarly debate. The fourth chapter, by contrast, will constitute a broader analysis of his biblical hermeneutics, and I shall argue that his exegetical works have been largely misread (or, perhaps, selectively read), giving the appearance of a much greater Origenian influence than is indeed present.

CHAPTER THREE

TRACTATUS ORIGENIS AND *TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO*: ESTABLISHING THE GREGORIAN EXEGETICAL CORPUS

I. STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Scholarship on Gregory of Elvira has been greatly hindered by the fact that virtually no manuscripts have come down to us bearing his name. The information that Jerome provides about his corpus is limited indeed: ‘Gregory of Beatica, bishop of Elvira, wrote a number of treatises in mediocre style, even into extreme old age, and an elegant book *On the Faith*. He is said to be alive today’.¹ Unlike the entries on other notable Latin exegetes, such as Victorinus of Poetovio² or Hilary of Poitiers,³ Jerome does not tell us on which biblical texts Gregory commented. He slowly receded into the mists of history, remembered, if at all, for his ecclesiological rigorism and enigmatic relationship with the schismatic bishop Lucifer of Cagliari.

The first attempt to identify Gregory as author of a text came in 1675, when the French Jansenist Paschasius Quesnel, in the *dissertationes* appended to his edition of Leo the Great, argued that the Spanish bishop was the author of the anti-Arian treatise *De Fide*, found both in the Latin manuscripts of Gregory of Nazianzus’ orations and among the works of Ambrose of Milan.⁴ His claim was supported a century later by

¹ *De Vir. Ill.*, 105 (PL 23:703A): ‘Gregorius, Baeticus, Eliberi Episcopus, usque ad extremam senectutem diversos mediocri sermone tractatus composuit, et de Fide elegantem librum, qui hodieque superesse dicitur’.

² *De Vir. Ill.*, 74 (PL 23:683B-C): ‘Victorinus, Petavionensis episcopus, non aequae Latine ut Graece noverat. Unde opera ejus grandia sensibus, viliora videntur compositione verborum. Sunt autem haec: Commentarii in Genesim, in Exodum, in Leviticum, in Isaiam, in Ezechiel, in Abacuc, in Ecclesiasten, in Cantica Canticorum, in Apocalypsim Joannis, adversum omnes haereses, et multa alia. Ad extremum martyrio coronatus est’.

³ *De Vir. Ill.*, 100 (PL 23:699B-C): ‘Hilarius, urbis Pictavorum Aquitaniae episcopus, factione Saturnini Arelatensis episcopi, de synodo Biterrensi in Phrygiam relegatus, duodecim adversus Arianos confecit libros et alium librum de Synodis, quem ad Galliarum episcopos scripsit, et in psalmos commentarios, primum videlicet, et secundum, et a quinquagesimo primo usque ad sexagesimum secundum, et a centesimo decimo octavo usque ad extremum, in quo opere imitatus Origenem, nonnulla etiam de suo addidit’.

⁴ *Dissertatio Decima Quarta*, reprinted in PL 56:1041B-1067B. He notes that Chiffletius (1614) had already argued that the work was not by either Gregory Nazianzus or Ambrose, but instead by Vigilius of Thapsus. Quesnel, however, follows the opinion of a *vir quidam doctissimus inter theologos Parisinos*

Florio de Udine,⁵ and again at the turn of the twentieth century by G. Morin and A. Wilmart.⁶ In the mid-1840s, moreover, during travels in Spain and Portugal, G. Heine discovered three manuscripts of a text entitled *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, ostensibly by Gregory the Great. The *excipit* of one of the manuscripts (Llerida, Archivo de la Catedral 2), however, reads *explicit explanatio beati gregorii eliberritani episcopi in canticis canticorum*,⁷ leading Heine to posit that the genuine author was Gregory of Elvira.⁸

In 1900 another text surfaced, which would be linked to the Spanish bishop. The *editio princeps* of a hitherto unknown work, the *Tractatus Origenis de Libris Sanctarum Scripturarum*, was published by P. Battifol and A. Wilmart.⁹ Battifol surmised, in keeping with the manuscript evidence, that the text was a translation of certain unknown homilies of Origen.¹⁰ A court of German scholars thought the Origenian provenance unlikely and suggested Novatian as a candidate instead. G. Morin, however, ventured the hypothesis that the *Tractatus Origenis* was in fact a lost work of Gregory of Elvira.¹¹ Although his theory was unanimously rejected at first – indeed, he himself would recant only two years later¹² – within a decade there was unanimous agreement that the *Tractatus Origenis* was genuinely by Gregory.¹³

that *opus esse Gregorii Baetici Illiberritani episcopi, qui ex invicto Nicaenae fidei defensore Luciferiani schismatici sectator factus est.*

⁵ Florio de Udine, *De Sancto Gregorio Illiberitano libelli 'De Fide' auctore, necnon de SS. Hilario et Hieronimo Origenis interpretibus dissertationes*, Bononiae, 1789. See the discussion in Joaquín Pascual Torró, *Gregorio de Elvira: La Fe* (Fuentes Patristicas 11; Madrid: Editorial Ciudad Nueva, 1998), p. 19-22.

⁶ G. Morin, 'Les nouveaux Tractatus Origenis et l'héritage littéraire de l'évêque espagnol Grégoire d'Illiberris' *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuse* 5 (1900), pp. 141-61; A. Wilmart, 'Les Tractatus sur le Cantique attribuées à Grégoire d'Elvire' *BLE* 7 (1906), pp. 233-99.

⁷ Fol. 118^v.

⁸ G. Heine, *Bibliotheca anecdotorum: seu veterum monumentorum ecclesiasticorum collectionem* (Leipzig, 1848), pp. 132-166.

⁹ Paris, 1900. Both extant manuscripts – the tenth century codex Aurelianensis 22 and thirteenth century codex Audomarensis 250 – preserve the treatise under the name *Tractatus Origenis de Libris Sanctarum Scripturarum*. See CCSL 69, p.4.

¹⁰ P. Battifol, 'Les Tractatus Origenis. A propos d'un livre nouveau' *Revue Biblique* 12 (1903), pp. 81-93.

¹¹ G. Morin, 'Les nouveaux Tractatus', pp. 222-245.

¹² G. Morin, 'Autour des <<Tractatus Origenis>>' *RBen* (1902), p. 22.

¹³ The lone dissenter was Dom Cuthbert Butler, who capitulated at the end of the decade in 'Tractatus de Epithalamio and Tractatus Origenis', *JTS* 10/2 (1909), pp. 450-459

The key to this identification was the close philological analysis, undertaken by Wilmar, of the *Tractatus Origenis* and the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, the latter being more or less securely Gregorian. Through a careful examination of similarities in language, biblical citations, and theology, Wilmar demonstrated that the *Tractatus Origenis*, *de Epithalamio*, and *de Arca Noe* – as well as the *De Fide* – were composed by the same author, Gregory of Elvira.¹⁴

Two notable manuscript discoveries in the 1950s by A.C. Vega would lend even stronger support to Wilmar's thesis. A sixteenth century manuscript of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, preserved in the Spanish codex Biblioteca Nacional 3396, makes no mention of Gregory the Great and attests *beatus gregorius episcopus iliberritanus* as the author in the incipit.¹⁵ In a ninth century visigothic manuscript, moreover, the poet-theologian Alvaro of Cordova attributes several lines of a text to Gregory, which display close verbal agreement with *Tractus Origenis* 13.26.¹⁶ This text, or one containing parallel material, must have been circulating in the early medieval period under Gregory's name.

And yet a cloud of uncertainty remains over Gregory's exegetical corpus. Although most scholars accept that he is the author of the *Tractatus Origenis*, the problem of Origen's influence looms large. The first and most decisive argument against Gregory's authorship of this treatise was put forth by C. Butler, who noted verbatim agreement between portions of the third *Tractatus* and the seventh homily in Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Homilies on Genesis*, completed circa 403/4.¹⁷ Since, as Butler cogently argued, the nature of the agreement strongly suggests that the author of the *Tractatus* was dependent upon Rufinus and not vice versa, it is difficult to see how Gregory, likely long dead before 403, could be the author. In spite of Battifol's

¹⁴ André Wilmar, 'Les Tractatus', pp. 233-99. He was critiqued by P. LeJay, 'L'Heritage de Grégoire d'Elvire', *RBen* 25 (1908), pp. 435-57 and Butler, '*Tractatus de Epitalamio*', pp. 450-459, for being overly pedantic, and treating the common occurrences of expressions such as *et ceteri*, *eo quod*, *ut dixi*, etc. as evidence of a single authorial hand. Both LeJay and Butler, however, were ultimately convinced by the similarities even if 'three-fourths...are devoid of probative force' (Butler, '*Tractatus de Epitalamio*', p. 454).

¹⁵ Fol. 48^v.

¹⁶ *Academiae Regalis Historicae Matritensis* 80, fol. 644^v. For a comparison of the texts, see below. See CCSL 69, p.liii.

¹⁷ C. Butler, 'The New *Tractatus Origenis*' *JTS* 1 (1900), pp. 113-21.

protests that Rufinus copied from the *Tractatus*,¹⁸ Butler's argument clearly won the day. Even when he was finally persuaded by Wilmart's philological analysis and retracted his objection to Gregorian authorship, he remained unable to explain the seeming dependence of the *Tractatus* upon Rufinus-Origen.¹⁹ Butler also drew attention to a striking similarity between a list of biblical citations in the first *Tractatus* and a Greek fragment – nowhere preserved in Latin – of Origen's *Commentary on Genesis*. Given the high probability that Gregory knew little to no Greek, this too has remained a problem.

It is only in the last several decades that scholars have sought to provide a concrete explanation for this dependence of the third *Tractatus* upon Rufinus' translation as well as for the strongly Origenist character that marks all of Gregory's exegesis – something rather problematic given that Latin translations of Origen, as far as we know, were first produced in the 380s by Jerome, long into the tenure of the Spanish bishop. Three hypotheses have been put forward, which I will introduce briefly at this point and explore in more detail in the following section.

1. Gregory, despite being *in extrema senectute* in the 380s, lived and preached well into the first decade of the fifth century, and had access to a wide range of Jerome's and Rufinus' translation of Origen, including the *Homilies on Genesis*.
2. Someone other than Gregory wrote the *Tractatus Origenis*.
3. Gregory and Rufinus both made use of an early, possibly third century, Latin translation of Origen, which has since been lost.

None of these is without problems, nor does any represent the consensus opinion – although the latter is difficult to assess, given the paucity of scholarship. We shall come to consider the merits of these hypotheses later in the chapter.

This problem of the *Tractatus Origenis* and its sources has direct relevance for our study of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. First, and most simply, Wilmart demonstrated such a close relationship between the *Tractatus Origenis* and the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* that were it to be established that someone other than Gregory wrote the former, this would have serious implications for the authorship and date of the latter.

¹⁸ P. Battifol, 'Où en est la question de <<Tractatus Origenis>>?' *BLE* (1905), pp. 310-315.

¹⁹ Butler, '*Tractatus de Epithalamio*', pp. 450-459

There is, moreover, in the *Tractatus Origenis* a significant amount of hermeneutical and theological reflection that is not present in the vastly shorter *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, and this material must be established as genuinely Gregorian if it is to be employed to sketch the broader contours of Gregory's thought. Thirdly, and most fundamentally, understanding Gregory's use of Origen in the former work will help us to understand his use of Origen in the latter. It has been proposed that Gregory employed Jerome's translation of Origen's two *Homilies on the Song of Songs* in his *Tractatus de Epithalamio* and modified the contents in accordance with his own theological interests.²⁰ If, however, it can be demonstrated that Gregory did not have direct knowledge of Origen's writings, this necessarily changes our reading of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I will individually consider the *Tractatus Origenis* and the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. For each text, I will examine in some detail the extant manuscripts, authorship, date, and genre. In so doing, I hope to begin to defend my claim that it is untenable to hold the view that Gregory relied directly upon Origen for his hermeneutics and exegesis. I will continue this argument in the following chapter, in which we will have an opportunity to undertake a close examination of Gregory's hermeneutics and exegetical method in comparison with Origen.

II. THE *TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO*

The *Tractatus de Epithalamio* was the first work to be printed in a modern edition and ascribed to Gregory of Elvira, in G. Heine's *Bibliotheca anecdotorum: seu veterum monumentorum ecclesiasticorum collectionem*, where it was accompanied by a very brief introduction.²¹ Heine discovered three manuscripts of the text in Spain and Portugal, dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries – R (Lleida, Archivo de la Catedral 2; 10th c.); P (Porto, Biblioteca Publica Municipal do Porto 800; 10th/11th c.); B

²⁰ Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien*, p. 29; Matter, *Voice*, pp. 87-9. See the discussion in the Introduction.

²¹ Heine, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 132-166.

(Barcelona, Biblioteca de la Iglesia Catedral de Barcelona 64; 11th/12th c.). The text is divided into five *libri*, which cover *Song* 1:1-3:4. Heine noted that although R attests *Gregorius Papa Romensis* as the author in the incipit, this could not be the correct attribution.²² He based his conclusion on the lack of any subsequent references to the treatise, the many differences between its scriptural citations and the Vulgate, and the generally ‘alien’ character of its theology.²³ Instead, he followed the *explicit* of R, which reads *explicit explanat[i]o b[ea]ti g[re]g[o]rii eliberritani ep[iscop]i in canticis canticorum*, and concluded that the author is Gregory of Elvira.²⁴ Even though R is the only manuscript that attests Gregory of Elvira as the author, Heine considered it be the most unreliable and interpolated manuscript of the three, preserving as it does a much longer version of books one and two than either B or P. Heine claimed that B, the shortest of the three, was the most reliable, and based his edition primarily on that manuscript.²⁵

The discovery of the first exegetical work of Gregory of Elvira, also notable for being the earliest extant Latin commentary on the *Song of Songs*, seems to have aroused no interest or comment in the first half-century following its publication. It was, however, brought to the foreground by A. Wilmart in 1906, in a controversy regarding the *Tractatus Origenis*. Wilmart undertook a detailed comparison of the language, biblical citations, and theology of the two texts, and he concluded that they were composed by the same author. His analysis, however, suggested that R, which Heine had considered to be greatly interpolated, was in fact the most reliable manuscript, for many of the parallels with the *Tractatus Origenis* were to be found only in R, and not B or P. Wilmart, moreover, noted that the portion of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* quoted by Beatus of Libania in the second book of his *Adversus Elipandum*, addressed to the ‘adoptionist’ archbishop of Toledo, agreed with R against B.²⁶ He surmised that B and P

²² Heine, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 132. Heine, however, neglects to mention that codex P (Porto, Biblioteca Publica Municipal do Porto 800) also attests *Beatus Gregorius Papa Romensis*.

²³ Heine, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 132.

²⁴ Heine, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 133.

²⁵ Heine, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 133.

²⁶ *Adv. Elip.* 2.75-83 (PL 96: 1017A-1020D). Beatus quotes verbatim nearly the whole of *Cant.* 1.1-21, with 1.3 and 1.17-19 omitted. He does indeed appear to follow the longer recension (e.g., *vatem integrum*

were abbreviated from the much longer, original version, preserved in R.²⁷ He also printed his own edition of the first book of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, relying largely on R for his reconstruction.

Again, the matter rested for another half-century. In the 1950s, A.C. Vega published an edition of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* in volume 55 of the long-running *España Sagrada* series.²⁸ His new edition marked a significant advancement over those of Heine and Wilmart, however, as he discovered three new manuscripts – A (Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia Emilianensis 80; 9th c.); U (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional 8873; 12th c.); N (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional 3996; 16th c.) – that shed an entirely new light on the textual history of the *de Epithalamio*. To begin with, the new discoveries helped to confirm Gregory of Elvira as the author. Although A simply begins *item incipit alium expositum in cantica canticorum*, following on from a commentary attributed to Justus of Urgel, and U again attests *Gregorius Papa* as author, N reads *Prologus, Praefatio Epithalamii B. Gregorii Episcopi Illiberitani*. More importantly, however, the three additional manuscripts point to the existence of two distinct recensions of the first two books; there is general agreement regarding the final three books. A and B preserve a shorter recension; R, U, and N preserve a longer recension; P is a mixed text-type. Vega believed that Gregory revised his commentary on the *Song*, and is thus himself the author of both extant recensions. In his edition,

Salomonem; vox est ad Christum filium dei, tricenarium iuvenem, decorum forma prae filiis hominum, verba facientis). But his omission of 1.3 and 17-19 is curious, since both appear only in the longer recension. There is also the addition of a lengthy section between 1.2 and 1.4, in which Beatus emphasizes that there is a single, unified *persona* in the incarnation, following Gregory's *id est, deus et homo* with *Duo hi, id est Verbum et anima, una persona, Sponsus et sponsa in una carne*. He writes that just as Christ shares the substance [*substantia*] of humanity in the incarnation, so too does Christ share the substance of the Father in the Godhead: *Quia non sunt duo, sed una caro, id est, una natura carnis, et una substantia Christi et nostra. Sicut una substantia est Christi et Patris. Quia et cum Patre perfectus Deus est, et nobiscum perfectus homo est* (2.75). This excursus by Beatus well fits his polemic against Ellipandus, who appears to separate the divine and human elements in Christ, by claiming that the pre-incarnate Word relates to the Father 'by nature' (*natura*), but in the incarnation relates to the Father 'by adoption' (*adoptione*). Cavadini has compellingly demonstrated that Ellipandus' 'adoptionism', although designated as neo-Nestorian by later polemicists such as Alcuin as well as modern scholars, is best understood purely within the matrix of Western, specifically Spanish, theological trajectories. See J. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785-820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), esp. 10-70.

²⁷ A. Wilmart, 'Les <<Tractatus>>', pp. 237-48.

²⁸ Madrid, 1957.

however, he followed the reading of the longer recension. A decade later, the entire works of Gregory of Elvira, including the *dubia et spuria*, were published in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, and the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* was edited by J. Fraipont.²⁹ Fraipont's introduction is unhelpfully brief, listing only the previous three editions and the manuscripts employed by the editors, and he notes at the conclusion that his own edition is based upon Vega's, '*cuius textus et apparatus criticus nonnullis in locis emendari potuerunt*'.³⁰

With a proper critical edition of the text in place and a more complete understanding of the manuscript tradition, the problems were only exposed, not solved. Questions regarding the nature of the double-recension of the text, its date(s), setting, form (commentary? homilies?), and use of sources seemed to generate no interest. In particular, the problem of the text's prologue, which does not appear in the manuscripts of the shorter recension (A and B), received, surprisingly, no comment from editors. The prologue is significant, because it is in large part lifted from Jerome's translation of Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* – a fact noted by Fraipont in his critical apparatus. I here reprint it to demonstrate the extent of the parallel.

Jerome, *Hom. In Cant.* 1.1 (SC 37, p. 61)

Orantibus autem vobis et revelante Deo quattuor in his mihi videor invenire personas, virum et sponsam, cum sponsa adulescentas, cum sponso sodalium greges. Alia dicuntur a sponsa, alia a sponso, nonnulla a iuenculis, quaedam a sodalibus sponsi... Christum sponsum intellige, ecclesiam sponsam sine macula et ruga, de qua scriptum est: ut exhiberet sibi gloriosam ecclesiam non habentem maculam neque rugam aut aliud quid eorum, sed ut sit sancta et immaculata. Eos vero, qui, cum sint fideles, non sunt tamen istiusmodi, quales sermo praefatus est, sed iuxta modum quondam adepti videntur salutem, animas animadvertite credentium et adulescentulas esse cum sponsa. Angelos vero et eos, qui pervenerunt in virum perfectum, intellige viros esse cum sponso.

Tractatus de Epithalamio Praef. (Schulz-Flügel, p.163)

Iam vero in canticis canticorum figuraliter sub epithalamii carmine quattuor Salomon introducit personas, virum scilicet et sponsam, cum sponsa adulescentas, cum sponso sodalium greges. Alia dicuntur ab sponsa, alia ab sponso, nonnulla a iuenculis, quaedam a sodalibus sponsi. Sponsus Christus significatur et sponsa ecclesia sine macula et ruga, de qua scriptum est: ut exhiberet sibi gloriosam ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam. Eos vero qui cum sint fideles, iuxta modum quendam adepti videntur salutem animas significari credentium et adulescentulas esse cum sponsa, angelos vero et eos qui pervenerunt in virum perfectum, viros cum sponso. In hoc autem libro prius sponsa loquitur dicens: *osculetur me osculo oris sui*, ac si dicat: tangat me dulcedine praesentiae unigeniti filii redemptoris mei. Haec pauca de

²⁹ CCSL 69, pp. 165-210.

³⁰ CCSL 69, p. 167.

If Gregory included this prologue when he revised the text, then this has important implications. Since Jerome translated Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* in 383/4,³¹ and since there are no other verbatim borrowings from the *Homilies* in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, this date would serve as the *terminus ante quem* for the shorter recension and the *terminus post quem* for the longer recension. It would also establish that Gregory had direct knowledge of Origen. But there are significant problems with positing that Gregory did indeed write the prologue. The most glaring question is why would Gregory compose a prologue in which he cites such an extensive portion of the *Homilies* – indeed, a portion that does not even correctly represent his own exegetical method in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, as I shall demonstrate below – and ignore them entirely during his other revisions?

Eva Schulz-Flügel, in her 1994 edition of the text, was the first editor to take these questions of form, composition, influence, and date seriously.³² After including a detailed history of the previous editions and a brief biographical sketch of Gregory's life, she attempts to date the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. In this regard, unfortunately, she cannot provide much precision, arguing that the most we can say is that the text was written before 392.³³ She bases this claim on a passage from Jerome's commentary on Habakuk, written in 392, which reads, 'I know of a certain one of our brothers who understands the *stone that cried from the wall* to be the Lord our Saviour and the *scarab speaking from the wood* to be the robber, who blasphemed the Lord'.³⁴ The only other such extant reading of the passage is in *Cant.* 4.6-7, which Schulz-Flügel assumes is the

³¹ Jerome completed the translation during his sojourn in Rome 382-85, and he dedicates the work *beatissimo papae Damaso* (prol.; SC 37bis, p. 56). The year 383 has been postulated by J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life and Writings* (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. 86.

³² Schulz-Flügel.

³³ Schulz-Flügel, p. 25: 'Damit fällt die Schwierigkeit einer Spätdatierung des Epithalamium fort, zuma andere Anzeichen darauf hindeuten, daß Gregor diese Arbeit vor dem Jahr 392 fertiggestellt hat'.

³⁴ Latin text cited at Schulz-Flügel, p. 26: *Scio quemdam de fratribus lapidem qui de pariete clamaverit intellexisse dominum salvatorem et scarabeum de ligno loquentem latronem, qui dominum blasphemaverit.*

text to which Jerome is referring.³⁵ ‘*The stone, that is Christ, cried from the wall of his body to the Father, and the scarab announced him from the wood, that is one of the robbers proclaimed saying, Since you are the son of God...(Luke 23:39)*’.³⁶ Schulz-Flügel thus eliminates the possibility that the *Tractatus* was written after 392, but since Gregory died shortly thereafter, this conclusion is not entirely illuminating.

Of much more interest is her analysis of the two recensions of the *Tractatus*.³⁷ Following the consensus established by Vega and Fraipont, she claims that both recensions can be traced back to Gregory’s pen, with the shorter recension (A and B) authored first and later expanded by Gregory (R, U, N). Schulz-Flügel helpfully notes three main kinds of revisions (‘Veränderungen’). First, the slight addition to and expansion of individual phrases (‘Auffüllungen und Ergänzungen’): *per Salomonem* becomes *per vatem integrum Salomonem* (1.1); *sequar haereticam factionem* becomes *sequar per separationem nominis tui haereticam factionem* (2.11).³⁸ Secondly, the addition of new ideas at the conclusion of existing passages (‘zusätzliche Passagen mit neuen Gedankengängen und Zusammenfassungen als Abschluß eines Abschnittes’). This includes, for example, the addition of an entirely new section at *Cant.* 1.3, in which Paul’s words in *Eph* 3:18 are cited to encourage Christians to search out the hidden meaning of Scripture, and the extended reflection on the ‘allegory of words [*allegoria verborum*]’ in *Cant.* 2.8-9.³⁹ The third kind of revision is the re-wording and re-arranging of particular passages (‘Umformulierungen ganzer Passagen, die keine inhaltlichen Erweiterungen darstellen. Es scheint so, daß einige dieser Passagen, die durch einen neuen Wortlaut ersetzt werden sollten’).⁴⁰ A prime example is *Cant.* 2.4, in which Gregory re-works the existing material, adding additional scriptural citations:

³⁵ Schulz-Flügel, p. 26: ‘Wenn also Hieronymus mit dem *quidam de fratribus* Gregor von Elvira meint, muß dieser das Epithalamium vor dem Entstehungsjahr des Habakuk-Kommentars 392 geschrieben haben’.

³⁶ *Cant.* 4.7 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 239): *Lapis itaque Christus de pariete corporis clamavit ad patrem et scarabaeus de ligno adnuntiavit ea, id est unus de latronibus pronuntiavit dicens: tu cum sis filius dei...*

³⁷ Schulz-Flügel, pp. 41-51.

³⁸ Schulz-Flügel, pp. 46-7.

³⁹ Schulz-Flügel, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Schulz-Flügel, 47-8.

Hanc derelictam apostolus Paulus vineam de persecutore apostolus meruit fieri, nolens legalem observantiae custodire circumcisionem carnis, neomeniae et sabbatorum dies festos et cetera, quae in lege inveniuntur esse praecepta, sed mandata Christi maluit custodire.

Beatus apostolus Paulus relicta hac vinea populi Israelis, quam custodiendam acceperat, de persecutore apostolus esse meruit, quia *noluit iustitiam*, ut ipse dicit, *quae ex lege est, facere, sed maluit eam, quae ex fide est, adimplere* (Phil 3:9), id est noluit legalem munificentiam observare, circumcisionem carnis, observantias escarum, sabbati curam, neomenias et dies festos purificationis et cetera, quae in lege Moysi inveniuntur esse praecepta. Haec ergo omnia, quae in vinea populi deputantur, noluit servare et ideo dicit: *Filii matris meae*, id est synagogae populi, *oppugnaverunt me* (Cant 1:7), quia relicta vinea Israel praecepta Christi maluit custodire.

In the longer recension, Gregory takes great care to expand upon his polemic against the Jews, which began at *Cant.* 2.1 with his interpretation of *Song* 1:7, ‘The sons of my mother fought against me’. He begins by adding a reference to *Phil* 3:9 to contrast the justification [*iustitiam*] that comes from the law [*ex lege*] with that which comes from faith [*ex fide*]. Gregory, moreover, expands the list of things that it is not proper to keep to include ‘observations of food (sc. restrictions) [*observantias escarum*]’ and adds *purificationis* to *dies festos*. He then concludes the section with a restatement of the key biblical text – ‘the sons of my mother fought against me’ – and emphasises that the *filii matris meae* are the *populi synagogae*.

Unlike her predecessors, however, Schulz-Flügel attempts to account for the reason Gregory revised his own work. There is, of course, a precedent with the *De Fide*. Gregory appended an introduction to the revision of his anti-Arian work (1-14), in which he explains that he has been accused of denying the *personam propriam verbi* – a charge of Sabellianism, which he goes on to refute.⁴¹ Schulz-Flügel proposes that Gregory revised the *de Epithalamio* not to clarify some of its contents, but rather to change a straightforward exegetical work into a ‘defense against heretical ideas’.⁴² Her assertion

⁴¹ *De Fide* 6 (CCSL 69, p. 222): ‘Indeed, I am amazed that they are thus able to believe that we deny the proper person of the Word, which is the Son [*unde mirari me fateor hoc ita sentiri potuisse, quasi nos personam propriam verbi, quod est filius, negaremus*]’.

⁴² Schulz-Flügel, p. 142: ‘Während die ursprüngliche Fassung ganz und gar auf die Kommentierung des Bibeltextes ausgerichtet war, sollte die Umarbeitung der Abwehr häretischer Ideen dienen’

has merit, although it should be emphasized that there are anti-heretical sentiments in the shorter recension as well. In his exegesis of *Song* 1:7 – ‘lest I become as veiled besides the flocks of your companions’ – in both recensions, he warns Christians against being deceived by ‘pseudoapostles [*pseudoapostolos*]’ and led astray by some ‘heretical faction [*haereticam factionem*]’ (2.11). The warning not to get involved with heretics is repeated in the subsequent paragraphs. Again, in *Cant.* 4.24-25, he interprets the ‘little foxes [*vulpes pusillas*]’ of *Song* 2:15 as ‘heretics’ – *homines subdolos et monstruosos* – a tradition that can be dated back to Origen.⁴³ It should also be noted that several of the revisions expand upon his attacks against the Jews, not heresy (cf. *Cant.* 1.19, 29; 2.4, 42-43).

Schulz-Flügel’s contributions to the study of the *de Epithalamio* – indeed, of Gregory’s exegesis – are many, but perhaps her most significant, at least for our purposes, is her demonstration that the prologue is spurious: ‘Dieser Prolog ist sicherlich unecht’.⁴⁴ The parallel with Origen’s *Homilies on the Song of Songs* had long been noted, but she drew attention to a parallel that had been missed – the second-last line of the prologue, *tangat me dulcedine praesentiae unigeniti filii redemptoris mei*, appears verbatim in Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Job*.⁴⁵ Bede preserves this phrase in Book 7 of his *In Cantica Canticorum Allegorica Expositio*, which is a catena of Song exegesis culled from the writings of Gregory the Great.⁴⁶ This phrase definitely originated with Gregory the Great. The use of the word *redemptor* to refer to Christ appears nowhere else in the *de Epithalamio*. By contrast, it appears in six of the excerpts quoted by Bede in the seventh book of the *In Cantica*, and Gregory the Great frequently employs it throughout his writings. There are thus no verbatim links between the *de Epithalamio* and Jerome’s translation of Origen.

Although Schulz-Flügel’s precise text-critical work has greatly enhanced our understanding of the text, we are still no closer to fixing a date or speaking about the

⁴³ *Comm in Cant.* 4.15.

⁴⁴ Schulz-Flügel, p. 103. A more cautious denunciation of the prologue’s authenticity was earlier set forth by Dottore, ‘Testo’, pp. 329-38.

⁴⁵ *Mor. In Iob* 27.34 (PL 76:419A).

⁴⁶ PL 91:1223C-D.

form and setting of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. It was almost certainly first delivered orally, although this was likely as a set of lectures, rather than as homilies. The opening lines of the first *liber*, as the manuscripts have it, preserved in both recensions, help give a sense of the context: ‘*Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, since your breasts are better than wine and the odour of your unguents are above all spices [aromata]. You have heard the wedding song, beloved brothers, which the Holy Spirit announced through the prophet Solomon in the voice of the bridegroom and bride.*’⁴⁷ The phrase *audistis epithalamium carmen, dilectissimi fratres* is significant. Not only does it signal the oral context of the treatise, it seems to indicate that the entire text of the *Song of Songs* was read aloud before the first lecture. This is starkly different from the *Tractatus Origenis*, in which the *lectiones* are fairly short portions of the biblical text (e.g., *Tract.* 4.1; 5.1; 6.1; 8.2; 10.2; 11.3). After concluding his brief introduction in which he likens the union of Christ and his Church with the union of Word and flesh in the incarnation (1.1), and in which he compares the *Song of Songs* to other biblical Songs (1.2), Gregory proceeds methodically to comment on *Song* 1:1-5 (*Cant.* 1.4-30). Again, unlike the *Tractatus Origenis*, he connects his unusually methodical exegesis rather rigidly with the phrases *et addidit*⁴⁸ (*Cant.* 1.9, 13, 17, 20, 22, 23) and *et subjungit* (*Cant.* 1.14, 21). He concludes the first homily with a very brief benediction in the shorter recension⁴⁹ and a lengthier one in the longer recension.⁵⁰

The second book (*Song* 1:6-12b) differs even more from the *Tractatus Origenis* than does the first, particularly in the shorter recension. There is no introduction, no address to hearers, no mention of a *lectio*, and no benediction. The rigid cadence – punctuated by frequent uses of the phrase *et addidit* – is softened somewhat by the lengthier expositions in the longer recension, and by the addition of a benediction.⁵¹ Books Three (*Song* 1:12b-2:6) and Four (*Song* 2:7-17) continue with the same quick,

⁴⁷ *Cant.* 1.1 (Schulz-Flügel, 164).

⁴⁸ Changed to *et adjecit* in the longer recension.

⁴⁹ *Cant.* 1.31 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 190): *per Iesum Christum, qui est benedictus in saecula saeculorum.*

⁵⁰ *Cant.* 1.31 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 191): *Sed iam sufficit modo istis capitulis disseruisse. Reliquum quod sequitur favente dei numine et clementia eius caritati vestrae disserere non tardabo, deo itaque patri omnipotenti gratias agentes per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum.*

⁵¹ *Cant.* 2.43 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 225): *Ipsi deo patri omnipotenti gratias agentes per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, qui est benedictus in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

rigid pace, each covering a larger number of passages than either of the first two books, but in roughly the same number of lines. The fifth book (*Song* 3:1-4) ends abruptly in the midst of a reflection about the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem, couched in Pauline language, that ‘now we see in an enigma and mirror, then face to face’;⁵² unlike the earlier books, which (in the shorter recension) range from 200-225 lines, this book ends at 105 lines. It is likely that there once was a version that went beyond *Song* 3:4.

I propose that the shorter recension of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* represents the series of lectures on the *Song of Songs* as Gregory originally delivered them. It lacks the oratorical flourishes of the *Tractatus Origenis*, favouring instead the methodical exposition of each individual passage. It is unfortunate that we possess no genuine prologue or prefatory letter that might tell us to whom Gregory may have sent copies of these lectures, but other bishops in Baetica would not be a bad guess, as the treatise does not seem to have had much influence – nor have any manuscripts been discovered – outside of the Iberian peninsula. I believe, moreover, that the original circulation of these lectures could have included an exposition of the entire *Song of Songs*.

Gregory, I believe, revised the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* to make it more presentable as a literary work. Perhaps he even received such a request from a correspondent who had read the original version. Many of the revisions simply add substance to the original or make the prose more formal. We could point, for instance, to the addition of the lengthy benedictions at the conclusion of the first and second books as prime examples of this. I direct the reader to Appendix Three for further examples of revisions that are not specifically polemical – in particular at *Cant.* 1.15-16, 29, 2.4, 6, 8-9, 36-7.

It is, however, undeniable that a number of the revisions to both Books One and Two have a decidedly ‘rigorist’ edge to them, reflecting a more conscious desire to draw firm boundaries around the true church. In the first book, he strengthens his polemic against the Jews in his exegesis of *Song* 1:3-4a through an identification of the believing Canaanite woman (*Matt* 15:22) as the *imaginem Ecclesiae ex gentibus*, whose faith

⁵² *Cant.* 5.14.

outstripped the obstinacy of the synagogue.⁵³ Gregory further makes an intertextual link between *Song* 1:5-6 and *Eph* 5:27, emphasizing that the bride, who was *fusca*, has been made *decora* through her washing in the waters of baptism and in the blood of Christ, and that she now has *nullam maculam delicti, nullam rugam perversae doctrinae*.⁵⁴ Such revisions are more numerous in the second book. He expands upon his interpretation of *Song* 1:8 – which he asserts in the shorter recension is an exhortation for the church to guard her faith (*custodiendam fidem*) – by specifying that the greatest threat to the purity of the church are priests who hold heretical ideas, and who, like rapacious wolves, cunningly deceive their flocks. Gregory seems to have in mind particularly the Christological error of those who ‘by seemingly probable examples either separate God from man or man from God’.⁵⁵ Again, in the same section, Gregory further develops his contrast between the integrity of the church and the infidelity of the heretics/Jews, by identifying the latter with the ‘herds’ that the church is commanded to pasture if she herself is unable to remain faithful.⁵⁶ The church can thus only be the church while her purity remains intact. Gregory further adds a rigorist dimension to his interpretation of the ‘chariots of Pharaoh’ (*Song* 1:9), which he interprets as the gentiles who, before Christ’s advent, were ‘under the yoke and authority of the devil [*sub iugo et potestate diaboli*]’.⁵⁷ In his revision, Gregory adds that we were made free ‘by the grace of Christ [*Christi gratia*]’, and that as a result ‘we must always stand guard with incorrupt and inviolate devotion’, or we risk returning to the slavery of the devil.⁵⁸ Finally, the only praise of martyrdom and virginity as Christian virtues in the *Tractatus* occurs his exegesis of *Song* 1:10-11, most prominently in the revised version, where he says that ‘the humble and submissive neck of the church...has been decorated with the ornaments of martyrdom and virginity and of all good works’.⁵⁹

⁵³ *Cant.* 1.19 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 181).

⁵⁴ *Cant.* 1.26-27 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 187).

⁵⁵ *Cant.* 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205): *quis per verisimilia exempla aut deum ab homine aut hominem a deo separaret.*

⁵⁶ *Cant.* 2.21-3 (Schulz-Flügel, pp. 209-11).

⁵⁷ *Cant.* 2.27 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 212).

⁵⁸ *Cant.* 2.28 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 215): *Semper incorrupta et inviolata devotione custodire debemus*

⁵⁹ *Cant.* 2.36 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 221): *Sed nunc ecclesiae cervix humilis et submissa et caelestis disciplinae, ut dixi, iugo subdita martyrii et virginitalis atque omnium bonorum operum ornamentis est*

These revisions certainly call for explanation. It appears that during the delivery of his lectures – that is, in the shorter recension – Gregory was concerned about the doctrinal purity of his church, but not to the degree that either Matter or Henry suggest.⁶⁰ When he came to revise the text for circulation, perhaps several years later, he had considerably more reason to worry about heretical infiltration in the church. I shall argue that the escalation in Gregory's rhetoric in the *Tractatus* reflects the escalating tensions that marked the Western church in the 350s, as Constantius marched west with the synodical letter of Sirmium (351) in search of subscriptions. This is an admittedly radical hypothesis and will require a good deal of analysis to prove. As such, the entirety of Part Three is devoted to the historical and theological context of the *Tractatus*; the question of the date of the text will be taken up there in considerably more detail.

III. THE *TRACTATUS ORIGENIS*

1. Manuscripts, Form, and Genre

The publication at the turn of the twentieth century of a previously unknown collection of homilies, preserved under the title *Tractatus Origenis de Libris Sanctarum Scripturarum*, sparked a firestorm in the scholarly community. It was not only that P. Battifol was claiming to have discovered an entirely new work by Origen, but he believed that this work had been translated into Latin in the middle of the third century by Victorinus of Poetovio – more than a century before Jerome began his ambitious project.

Only two manuscripts of the *Tractatus Origenis* are extant, both of which Battifol discovered in the north of France. The earliest is in the tenth century codex Aurelianensis, located in the city of Orléans. The other, in the twelfth century codex Audomarensis, is in St. Omer, near to the border with Belgium. The manuscripts

decorata. In his exegesis of Cant 1:11, however, he says that the martyrs are compared to gold, whereas the virgins are compared to silver (2.39).

⁶⁰ See the Introduction.

contain twenty *tractatus* divided into sections according to the biblical books. There are six *tractatus* on *Genesis*, three on *Exodus*, two on *Judges*, and one each on *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, *Joshua*, *Kings*, *Isaiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Zachariah*, and *Acts*. The *tractatus* were almost certainly delivered orally as homilies. The author employs both the verb *tractare* as well as the nouns *tractatus* and *sermo* with verbs of speaking or making to describe his activity, giving the impression that the text was either prepared in advance for public delivery or was taken down by a stenographer as it was being preached.⁶¹ There are also other verbal cues, such as the frequent use of the address *dilectissimi fratres* (e.g., *Tract.* 2.1; 3.3; 5.1; 6.1; 9.1; 10.1). The biblical text, moreover, that is the focus of the *tractatus* is frequently referred to as the *lectio* (e.g., *Tract.* 4.1; 5.1; 6.1; 8.2; 10.2; 11.3), and occasionally reference is made to the fact that it has just been read aloud.⁶²

Unlike the collection of homilies of Zeno of Verona, there are very few references in the *Tractatus Origenis* to specific liturgical practices that would help us to speak more precisely about their setting. There are, however, two possible exceptions. The ninth *tractatus*, a Christological reading of the Passover narrative from *Exodus* 12, is possibly a paschal homily. We know from the cycles of paschal homilies preached by Zeno that *Exodus* 12 was read and commented upon at the vigil in Verona.⁶³ The comparison between the two, however, must not be overstated. Zeno's paschal homilies are, on average, fifteen lines in printed editions; the ninth *tractatus* is 207 lines. If it does bear some connection with Easter celebrations, it would likely have been the centrepiece of the occasion on which it was preached – not, as with Zeno, one of a number of homilies preached in the lead-up to baptism.

⁶¹ E.g., *Tract.* 4.1 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *sermonem facere deberem*; *Tr.* 6.1 (CCSL 69, p. 43): *in uno tractatu universa disserere*; *Tr.* 8.2 (CCSL 69, p. 63): *quae omnia in uno tractatu disserere non tam difficile quam inorme est...et proinde cetera differentes de sola interim sabbati observatione tractemus*.

⁶² E.g., *Tract.* 5.1: *haec ergo lectio, quae nunc recitata est*; *Tr.* 10.2: *sed et nunc lectio ista quae recitata*.

⁶³ According to the reconstruction of G.P. Jeanes, *The Day Has Come: Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 23-25; 117-19. He argues that the extant manuscripts of Zeno's sermons attest the following cycle of homilies at the paschal vigil: Praefatio Paschalis, De Genesi (*Gen* 1), De Exodo 1 (*Exod* 12), De Exodo 2 (*Exod* 14), De Esaia (*Isa* 1, 5), De Danieli (*Dan* 3), Invitatio Fontis, Post Triditum.

Much depends upon the construal of two sentences. The first reads: ‘And thus the mystery of the pasch, beloved brothers, which now is celebrated in the passion of the Lord’s body, was neither sudden nor unplanned’.⁶⁴ The *nunc celebratur* could be taken as a specific marker of time – ‘now, on this very day, is celebrated’ – or a more general one – ‘now, in the age after Christ, is celebrated’. The latter reading cannot be ruled out, as the reference to the celebration of the Passion is in a subordinate position in the sentence, giving the true meaning of the Passover event and demonstrating why it ‘was neither sudden nor unplanned’. Indeed, such a reading fits well with Gregory’s anti-Jewish rhetoric, which stresses the way in which Jewish markers of identity are, in the light of Christ’s advent, overlaid with an entirely new meaning. There is also a sentence at the conclusion of the homily that reads: ‘Whoever celebrates the mystery of so great a work with lawful observation is a fellow of the apostles, a friend of the prophets, fulfils the law, guards the faith of the Gospel.’⁶⁵ This is clearly an exhortation for the proper celebration of Easter, but, again, it is unclear whether this is simply a general admonition or has more immediate relevance. A further difficulty in locating this homily during the Easter celebrations is the complete lack of mention either of candidates for baptism or of the newly-baptised. D. de Bruyne has asserted that the homily ‘est sans doute un sermon pascal’, because he cannot imagine *Exodus* 12 being read and commented upon at any other time.⁶⁶ But in the absence of other clear indicators and given our general ignorance regarding the lectionary in mid-fourth-century Spain, such a firm pronouncement is rash.

De Bruyne, moreover, claims with equal confidence that the twentieth *Tractatus*, on *Acts* 2:1-2, is a homily from Pentecost. The logic behind this assertion is clear, and it is supported by Gregory’s words, ‘This is the Spirit, who on this day, that is Pentecost, was sent by God to the church.’⁶⁷ The *hac die, id est Pentecosten* does certainly give us

⁶⁴ *Tract.* 9.1 (CCSL 69, p. 70): *paschae itaque sacramentum, dilectissimi fratres, quod nunc in dominici corporis pa[ssio]ne celebratur, non derepente nec inprovisum fuit.*

⁶⁵ *Tract.* 9.22 (CCSL 69, p. 75): *hoc ergo tanti muneris sacramentum qui legitima observatione celebrat, consors est apostolorum, socius prophetarum, implet legem, custodit evangelicam fidem*

⁶⁶ D. de Bruyne, ‘Encore Les <<Tractatus Origenis>>’ *RBen* 23 (1906), p. 182.

⁶⁷ *Tract.* 20.18 (CCSL 69, p. 145): *Hic <est>, inquam, spiritus, qui hac die, id est pentecosten a deo ecclesiae missus est.*

some basis for agreeing with de Bruyne regarding this homily. The *tractatus* does not, however, give us any further information about the celebration of the feast of Pentecost in Elvira. It is, rather, an extended theological reflection on the relationship between Christ and the Spirit, and Gregory specifically works out an answer to the problem of the double appearance of the Spirit in the Gospels – why he descended upon the Virgin at the moment of the Incarnation and why he later descended upon Christ at his baptism in the Jordan. Gregory argues that this was to demonstrate that it was the same divine Spirit who effected the union of *logos* and man that redeemed the fall of humanity, sanctifies the baptismal waters through which that redemption is conferred, and works in the lives of believers.⁶⁸

Even if these two are indeed festal homilies, it is worth noting that they differ little in form, style, and content from the eighteen others. The latter are likely homilies from the Sunday liturgy. But it is by no means a complete collection; a considerable amount of material is lacking. There are a disproportionately large number of homilies on *Genesis* and *Exodus*, the curious omission of *Deuteronomy* from the series on the Pentateuch, and a bizarre jump from *Zachariah* to *Acts*, passing entirely over the Gospels. It appears that at some point – whether during Gregory’s life or afterwards – a random collection of his sermons were retrieved from the archives of the Elviran cathedral and circulated.

2. The Early Philological Debate

These questions of form, setting, and composition have been overshadowed in scholarship by the far more perplexing ones of date and authorship that were so hotly contested. The initial claim of Battifol that the *Tractatus Origenis* were lost homilies of Origen was quickly rejected. All agreed that they were originally composed in Latin.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Tract.* 20.9-20.

⁶⁹ There are significant parallels between certain portions of the *Tractatus Origenis* and works of third-century Latin theologians. The most striking is a near verbatim borrowing from Tertullian’s *De Resurrectione* 8-9 and Minucius Felix’s *Ocatvius* 34 in *Tract.* 17.25-27, 29-30. There are also parallels with Tertullian’s *Adversus Iudaeos* 2 (*Tract.* 4.4), Novatian’s *De Trinitate* 6, 18 (*Tract.* 1.1-2, 3.32-3) and *De Cibiis Iudaiciis* (*Tract.* 10.34).

But the concord ended there, as no agreement could be reached even as to whether the *Tractatus* was pre-Nicene or post-Nicene – something that is particularly surprising, given several clear allusions to the Latin version of the Nicene creed.

The consensus that developed among German historians – in particular T. Zahn,⁷⁰ J. Haussleiter,⁷¹ and M. Weyman⁷² – saw Novatian as the author of the *Tractatus*. Two years later, H. Jordan, a student of Haussleiter, composed a book largely on the Christology of the *Tractatus*, re-iterating the earlier case for Novatian's authorship.⁷³ Although there are significant parallels between portions of the *Tractatus* and Novatian's writings (which at the time were thought to include the Pseudo-Cyprianic *De Bono Pudicitiae* as well as the *De Trinitate* and *De Cibiis Iudaiciis*), this was not the only reason Novatian was put forth as a candidate. Weyman adduced some seventeen pages of expressions that he considered peculiar to both Novatian and the author of the *Tractatus*. These include, for instance, the address *fratres sanctissimi*, reference to the Old Testament as *caelestis scriptura*, using *ex persona* to identify a speaker in scripture, the phrase *evangelica disciplina*, and reference to Paul as *apostolus auctor*.⁷⁴ With the philological grounding for the argument supposedly in place, Jordan sought to provide a theological basis to support Novatian's authorship.

The argument received very little support outside of Germany. G. Morin was convinced that the theology of the *Tractatus Origenis* was post-Nicene, and that, judging by stylistic similarities, it came from the same pen as the author of the *De fide orthodoxa contra Arianos*, which had by that time been more or less securely attributed to Gregory of Elvira.⁷⁵ C. Butler, who wrote a series of four *JTS* notes spanning the first decade of the twentieth century, thought initially that even Morin was dating the *Tractatus* rather

⁷⁰ T. Zahn, 'Predigten des Origenes oder des Novatianus' *Neue Kirckliche Zeitschrift* 11 (1900), pp. 348-366.

⁷¹ J. Haussleiter, 'Zwanzig Predigten Novatians' *Theologisches Litteraturblatt* 21 (1900), pp. 153-158.

⁷² M. Weyman, 'Neue Traktate Novatians' *Histories Jahrbuch* 21 (1900), pp. 212-16.

⁷³ Jordan, *Neuentdeckten Predigten Novatianus*. He provides a helpful survey of earlier scholarship at pp. 3-16 and he articulates his own support for Novatian's authorship, largely on theological rather than philological grounds, at pp. 50-65. His argument does not, however, focus on elaborating connections between the *Tractatus* and Novatian's works, but rather on defending Novatian's authorship despite the presence of Nicene sounding phrases at *Tract.* 3.33, 6.35, and 20.16.

⁷⁴ Weyman, 'Neue Traktate', p. 159.

⁷⁵ G. Morin, 'Les nouveaux Tractatus', pp. 145-61.

too early. Butler first noted a parallel between a Greek fragment of Origen's lost *Commentary on Genesis* and the first *Tractatus*, which could only partially be explained with reference to other Latin sources. Both Origen and the *Tractatus* are arguing against those who attribute bodily form to God, and the verses that they cite that seem to support this doctrine align remarkably closely, even in the order of citation; they both, moreover, use the reference to 'the seven eyes of the Lord' in *Zach* 4:10 as a refutation of the doctrine:⁷⁶

Origen, *Frag. In Gen.* (PG 12:93B-C)

ὁφθαλμοὺς θεοῦ ἐπιβλέποντας τὴν οἰκουμένην
(*Ps* 50:6), καὶ ὥτα αὐτοῦ εἶναι εἰς δέησιν
δικαίων ἐπινενευκότα (*Ps* 33:16), καί,
'Ὡσφρανθή κύριος ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας (*Gen* 8:21),
καὶ, τὸ στόμα κυρίου ἐλάλησε ταῦτα (*Isa* 1:20),
καὶ βραχίονα θεοῦ καὶ χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καὶ
δακτύλους, ἄντικρυς φάσκουσι ταῦτα οὐχ
ἕτερόν τι διδάσκειν ἢ τὴν μορφήν τοῦ θεοῦ...

Ἐκ μὲν τοῦ Ζαχαρίου, ὅτι Ἑπτὰ ὀφθαλμοὶ
κυρίου οἱ ἐπιβλέποντες ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν
(*Zach* 4:10). εἰ δὲ ἑπτὰ ἔχει ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ θεός,
ἡμεῖς δὲ δύο, οὐ κατ' εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ γεγόναμεν.

Gregory, *Tractatus* 1 (CCSL 69, p. 5)

Caput eius et capilli ut lana alba tamquam nix
(*Dan* 7:9); et: *Oculi domini super iustos et aures*
eius ad preces eorum (*Ps* 33:16) et: *odoratus est*
dominus odorem suavitatis (*Gen* 8:21) et: *Os*
domini locutum est ista (*Isa* 1:20) et: *Quae*
procedunt de labia mea non faciam irrita (*Isa*
58:14)...

Quid quod septem oculi domini (*Zach* 4:10)
leguntur, et homo duos oculos habet? Et ubi est
haec imago et similitudo dei in homine?

Novatian, in the sixth book of the *De Trinitate*, offers a similar list of verses that impute human qualities to God, and there are certain overlaps with the lists of both Origen and the *Tractatus*. He has citations of *Gen* 8:21 and *Isa* 1:20 in common with Origen and Gregory, although he does not reference these verses consecutively as they both do. He does not, moreover, make any reference to *Zach* 4:10, meaning that he cannot be the sole link between the two.⁷⁷ Butler surmised, therefore, that the author of the *Tractatus*

⁷⁶ Butler, 'New *Tractatus*', pp. 114-17.

⁷⁷ Butler, 'New *Tractatus*', pp. 116-17, is not even convinced that Novatian knew Origen's text, positing that he may have been directly reliant upon the list of Melito, to which Origen makes reference. He is, however, more certain that Gregory knew the *De Trinitate*. Both reference *Exod* 31:18 (*Digito dei tabulae legis lapideae scriptae* [Gregory]; *tabulae scriptae digito dei* [Novatian]), and they say the tablets were *traduntur Moysi*, though the biblical text does not add this detail.

‘had in his hands not only Novatian’s *de Trinitate*, but also the Origen fragment, or a translation thereof’.⁷⁸

It was, however, another observation, made initially in a postscript, that would convince him of the need for a date later than Morin had proposed. He pointed out that portions of the third *Tractatus* and the seventh homily in Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s *Homilies on Genesis* were verbally identical in places. Believing that Rufinus only ever translated the Greek text that was in front of him, however freely he may have done so, Butler concluded that the *Tractatus* had to post-date Rufinus, and hence is a product of at least the fifth century.⁷⁹ The argument was so convincing that Morin immediately retracted his earlier claim that Gregory was the author.⁸⁰ In his second article on the subject, Butler picked apart and ridiculed Weyman’s philological analysis, demonstrating that many of the expressions amassed to prove Novatian’s authorship occur also in Cyprian and Lactantius.⁸¹

Battifol also attacked the argument in favour of Novatian’s authorship, but he believed, abandoning his earlier claim of Origen, that it was still composed by a Novatianist, living perhaps in the opening decades of the fourth century. The Christology of the *Tractatus* was far too different from that of the *De Trinitate*, he asserted, for Novatian to have composed it. To begin with, he argued that there is no evidence to suggest that the phrases *deus verus de deo vero, unigenitus ab ingenito* (*Tr.* 3.33) and *deus de deo et lumen ex lumine procedere* (*Tr.* 6.35), never used by Novatian, were later interpolations, as Jordan had surmised.⁸² Moreover, he claims that the author of the *Tractatus* is far more precise than Novatian in his use of theological terminology,

⁷⁸ Butler, ‘New *Tractatus*’, p. 117.

⁷⁹ Butler, ‘New *Tractatus*’, pp. 120-1.

⁸⁰ G. Morin, ‘Autour des *Tractatus*’, p. 22.

⁸¹ C. Butler, ‘The New *Tractatus Origenis*’ *JTS* 2/1 (1901), pp. 255-9.

⁸² Battifol, ‘Les *Tractatus*’, pp. 84-6. H. Jordan, *Neuentdeckten Predigten Novatians*, p. 53, asserted that those phrases were likely to be later interpolations, since they did not seem to be connected with what went before and after in the *tractatus*, and that they were stock formulas that could have easily been inserted by a later editorial hand. Jordan simply presumes Novatian’s authorship, and after remarking that the problematic phrases appear nowhere else in Novatian and were likely not written by him he asks excitedly, ‘Also stamen die Traktate nicht von Novatian!?’ (p. 55).

particularly regarding the unity of the persons and the union of natures in Christ.⁸³ But the rigorist ecclesiology, which Jordan had highlighted,⁸⁴ meant for Battifol that the author could not be other than a Novatianist. Battifol lists nearly a page of citations from the *Tractatus* demonstrating the supposed hallmark of Novatian's ecclesiology: the church as an assembly of members purified in baptism who preserve the faith inviolate until death.⁸⁵ In particular, he saw the allegorical reading of the spotless sacrificial victim in the tenth *Tractatus* as attesting a church that lacked any penitential process, simply excluding any that fell short and lapsed into sin, whether that was sacrificing during persecution or abandoning one's vow of chastity.

Although he asserted that the 'X from X' formulae were not interpolations, Battifol nevertheless insisted that the *Tractatus* was not necessarily post-Nicene, as he produced what he believed to be an analogous phrase in Tertullian: '*ita de spiritu Spiritus, et de deo Deus, ut lumen de lumine accensum*'.⁸⁶ The Christology was, however, more sophisticated than Novatian's, perhaps dating to the late third or early fourth century. He dismissed Butler's claim for a fifth century date, using what he perceived to be incontrovertible evidence that Lucifer of Cagliari used the *Tractatus* in his *Moriendum esse pro Dei filio*. Battifol cited several instances of dependence, two of which I reproduce here:

Lucifer	<i>Tractatus Origenis</i>
Siquidem <u>novum</u> salutis <u>genus per Dei filium</u> fuerit tributum, <u>interire ne peream</u> (<i>Mori</i> . IV, 293, 25).	<u>Novum</u> etenim <u>genus per Christum</u> inventum est: <u>interire ne pereas</u> (<i>Tract.</i> P. 198, 14).
Christiani <u>scimus</u> ad hoc nos <u>Christi factos milites</u> , ut iniusto a te indicto <u>belli campo ducem nostrum</u> confessi (<i>Mori</i> . VI, p. 297, 24).	<u>Nescit</u> enim quidquam timere Christiana libertas...ad hoc coram multis credere contestatissimus, in haec quasi <u>milites Christi</u> sacramentorum

⁸³ Battifol, 'Les Tractatus', 86-8. Regarding the unity of the persons, Battifol notes, the author of the *Tractatus* frequently employs the terms *naturae unitas*, using *natura* in a technical sense, whereas Novatian is much looser, using terms such as *societatis concordia*, *concordia unitas*, *substantiae communio*. Moreover, the tripartite 'Origenian' anthropology of the *Tractatus* – man as flesh and soul, obtaining the spirit *postea per meritum* (*Tr.* 1.7) – which is not shared by Novatian, undergirds the Christological claim that 'the son if God is not otherwise able to be called man (*homo*) unless he put on flesh and soul [*carnem atque animam induit*]'.

⁸⁴ H. Jordan, *Neuentdeckten Predigten Novatians*, pp. 188-96.

⁸⁵ Battifol, 'Les Tractatus', pp. 89-90: 'Mais, cette purification une fois acquise par le baptême, la vie chrétienne consistera à la conserver intact jusqu'à la mort'.

⁸⁶ Battifol, 'Les Tractatus', pp. 85-6. See Tertullian, *Apologeticus Adversus Gentes Pro Christianis* 21.

The latter example proved decisive for Battifol. The phrase *belli campo ducem nostrum* (in Lucifer with a verb of confessing, in the *Tractatus* with a verb of following) appears nowhere else in Latin Christian literature. There thus, he surmised, had to be dependence, and he believed it far more likely that the brief sentence in Lucifer was a poor abbreviation – ‘un médiocre raccourci’ – of the more elegant prose of the *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus Origenis*, therefore, could be dated no later than 361, when Lucifer composed the *Moriendum esse pro Dei filio*.⁸⁷

Battifol’s argument failed to gain any acceptance, largely because it hinged on such a low view of Lucifer’s prose that he supposed the Italian bishop could never have turned an original phrase. Indeed, the second example is far from decisive. The parallel is not extensive at all, and the author of the *Tractatus* could quite easily have had Lucifer’s *ut iniusto a te indicto belli campo ducem nostrum confessi* in mind as he wrote. Certainly, the common appearance of *milites Christi* proves little. Even German scholarship, under the direction of Funk, Bardenhewer, and Harnack, began moving towards a late fourth-century date, primarily on account of the ‘X from X’ formulae that everyone, save Battifol, accepted was Nicene. Battifol’s suggestion that the phrases *deus verus de deo vero* and *deus de deo et lumen ex lumine* can be explained solely by reference to Tertullian’s *de deo Deus, ut lumen de lumine accensum*, and not by reference to the Latin version of the Creed, is not convincing.⁸⁸

Not content to accept Battifol’s dismissal of his argument, Butler composed yet another note in which he listed parallels between the *Tractatus Origenis* and the seventh homily in Rufinus’ translation of the *Homilies on Genesis*.⁸⁹ The following parallel, in Butler’s opinion, demonstrates most clearly the reliance of the former upon the latter:

⁸⁷ Battifol, ‘La Question’, pp. 310-315.

⁸⁸ Which is preserved, for example, in Gregory of Elvira’s *De Fide*, containing near parallels of the phrases in the *Tractatus Origenis*: *deum de deo, lumen de lumine, deum verum de deo vero* (1; CCSL 69, p. 222).

⁸⁹ C. Butler, ‘The So-Called *Tractatus Origenis* and Other Writings Attributed to Novatian’ *JTS* 6/2 (1905), pp. 587-598.

Si ergo caro cuius personam gerit Ismael, qui secundum carnem nascitur, spiritui blanditur, qui est Isaac, et illecebrosis cum eo deceptionibus agat, si delectationibus illiciat, voluptatibus molliat, huiusmodi ludus carnis cum spiritu, Saram maxime, quae est virtus, offendit, et huiusmodi blandimenta acerbissimam persecutionem iudicat Paulus, Et tu ergo, o auditor horum, non illam solam persecutionem putes, quando furore gentilium ad immolandum idolis cogeris: sed si forte te voluptas carnis illiciat, si tibi libidinis alludat illecebra, haec, si virtutis es filius, tamquam persecutionem maximam fuge. Idcirco enim et apostolus dicit: fugite fornicationem. Sed si iniustitia blandiatur, ut personam potentis accipiens, et gratia eius flexus, non rectum iudicium feras, intellegere debes, quia sub specie ludi blandam persecutionem ab iniustitia pateris. Verum et per singulas malitiae patitur. species, etiamsi molles et delicatae sint et ludo similes, has persecutionem spiritus dicito, quia in his omnibus virtus offenditur.

Hishmael etenim ficuram carnis ierit (g-), quia secundum carnem nascitur, Isaac autem spiritui (-us), quia per repromissionem generatur. Et ideo caro blanditur spiritui, ut inlecebrosis cum eo deceptionibus agat, delectationibus inliciat, uoluptatibus molliat

et libidines adludat inlecebra.

Unde, dilectissimi fratres, videte, quia et iniustitia homini blanditur, ut personam potentis accipiat et gratia eius flexus non rectum (iustum) iudicium ferat. Quapropter intellegere (-i-) debet quis, quia sub specie ludi blandam persecutionem ab iniustitia patitur.

Particularly important is the phrase, highlighted by Butler, *et libidines adludat inlecebra*, which in Rufinus-Origen is part of a longer thought on persecution – the persecution of the flesh versus that of the spirit – but which stands on its own in the *Tractatus*. Indeed, it seems that the author of the *Tractatus*, living in a time when the Empire was Christian, copied the passage from Origen, but excised the reference to pagan persecution and sacrifice. The reference to persecution makes perfect sense in Origen. To suppose that Rufinus spun a great anachronistic yarn around the words *et libidines adludat inlecebra* is not impossible, but the far less likely option.

Another telling parallel, not mentioned by Butler, is the allegorical reading of the *aqua de utre* that failed Ismael (*Gen 21:16*) as the letter of the Law (*Tract. 3.20*). There is, again, clear verbal dependence between the two texts:

Ille vero qui secundum carnem natus est, de utre aquam bibit, et aqua ipsa deficit ei, et in multis deficit. Uter legis est littera, de qua ille carnalis populus bibit, et inde intellectum capit: quae littera

Nam et aliter intellegi potest, quia aquam quam Hishmael de utre bibit legis littera est et ideo huiusmodi aqua ei defecit, quia littera frequenter defectum patitur, id est storialis intelligentia

frequenter ei deficit, et explicare se non potest. In multis enim defectum patitur historialis intelligentia.

There are several important reasons for believing that this section originated with Origen, and was not simply borrowed from Gregory by Rufinus. To begin with, the version in the *Tractatus* is condensed, and nearly every word used, including mundane ones such as *frequenter*, is found in the *Homilies*. Secondly, the *Tractatus* appears to smooth over a complexity in the Rufinus-Origen reading. According to the *Tractatus*, the water from the bottle fails Ismael and the ‘water which he drank from the bottle is the letter of the Law’. In Rufinus-Origen it is also the ‘water itself’ that failed Ismael, but it is the bottle [*uter*] – not the water – which is the *legis littera*. Although the shift is a little awkward and does not entirely keep with the narrative, one can certainly see why the bottle itself – a mere container – would be more appealing to Origen as an image of the ‘letter of the Law’ than the water would. Finally, Origen elsewhere speaks about the defectiveness of the letter, which is replete with σκάνδαλα, divinely ordained interpolations that point to the need for a spiritual reading.⁹⁰ This is the only occurrence of such a thought in the *Tractatus*, making it unlikely that Rufinus borrowed it and inserted it in the *Homilies*.

To cement his argument for a fifth-century provenance, Butler highlighted another parallel that he discerned between the ninth *Tractatus* and Gaudentius’ *Tractatus* III *de Lectione Exodi*, the base text of which is *Exod* 12:5.⁹¹ In the course of commenting on the phrase *ovis autem maturus masculus anniculus erit vobis ab agnis et haedis*, Gregory makes a series of unusual moves.⁹² After explaining the term *masculus*, he provides an explanation for why a ‘spotless lamb [*agnus immaculatus*]’ is chosen, even though the term *immaculatus* is not in the text.⁹³ Gregory then continues to explain why the lamb is perfect [*perfectus*], even though the text does not use the word *perfectus*. Butler thus surmises that in both instances the author is copying from other

⁹⁰ *DP* 4.2.9 (Koetschau, p. 321 ff).

⁹¹ *Tract.* III (CSEL 68, pp. 32-9).

⁹² *Tract.* 9.10-12 (CCSL 69, pp. 72-3).

⁹³ Although it is true that *immaculatus* does not appear in the text of *Exod* 12:5 as Gregory cites it, he does earlier cite *Jer* 11:19: *Ego quasi agnus immaculatus sine malitia adductus sum ad mortem*.

Latin commentaries, where the reading of the verse is slightly different. He can find nothing for the term *immaculatus*, but he believes Gaudentius' sermon is the source of his reflections on the term *perfectus*. Gaudentius, whose text reads '*Agnus enim perfectus, masculus, inquit, anniculus erit vobis,*' writes, 'He is perfect because all the fullness of divinity dwelt in him bodily'.⁹⁴ The *Tractatus* makes the same point, explicitly citing the Pauline text. Since Gaudentius' biblical text includes the word *perfectus*, Butler claims that the *Tractatus* must be dependent upon him.⁹⁵

Butler's argument regarding the dependence of the *Tractatus* upon Gaudentius is considerably weaker than his case for reliance upon Rufinus-Origen.⁹⁶ There are no extensive linguistic similarities, only the conceptual point of linking the term *perfectus* with the Pauline notion of the 'fullness of divinity' dwelling 'bodily' in Christ. And Gregory's discussion of this theme, in which he argues that it is precisely on account of this embodiment of divinity that 'what was lost in Adam was restored in Christ',⁹⁷ has much more depth than the simple paraphrase of Paul in Gaudentius. They offer, moreover, different interpretations of the term *masculus*.⁹⁸ It is reasonable enough to suppose that Gregory was reading from two different Latin translations of Scripture or was relying upon an earlier commentary that has since been lost.⁹⁹

Not even one year later, however, as Butler's argument began to gain sway, Wilmart delivered decisive proof that the author was in fact Gregory of Elvira. I have referred to the article above, but it bears repeating that the parallels between the style and theology of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* and the *Tractatus Origenis* were so

⁹⁴ *Tract. III* (CSEL 68, p. 37).

⁹⁵ Butler, 'So-Called *Tractatus Origenis*', pp. 590-2.

⁹⁶ P. LeJay, 'L'Héritage', p. 444, was similarly unimpressed: 'Je ne vois pas qu'il soit nécessaire d'admettre que le *Tractator* a copié Gaudentius. L'un et l'autre ont pu exploiter un commentaire qui se référait au texte *Agnus autem perfectus*'.

⁹⁷ *Tract. 10.12* (CCSL 69, p.73): *quae in Adam perierant, restaurarentur in Christo*.

⁹⁸ *Tract. 10.11* (CCSL 69, p. 72): *Masculum autem ideo dicit, ut carnem ipsam non femineam, sed virilem, id est perfecti viri esse ostenderet. Lect. III de Exod. (PL 20:865A): Masculus est quippe quia vir nasci dignatus est ex virgine, ut sexui utrique consuleret*.

⁹⁹ A citation of *Exod 12:5* in the Pseudo-Cyprianic *De pascha computus* (PL 4:943B) includes all three terms: *ovem immaculatum, anniculum, perfectum, masculum, ab agnis ab haedis accipietis*. This is likely an African form of the text, which Gregory may have known independently. He may also have known the *De pascha computus* itself. The text dates to 243 CE and is likely of African provenance. See G. Ogg, *The Pseudo-Cyprianic De Pascha Computus* (London: SPCK, 1955), pp. vii-viii.

convincing that Butler recanted his former view, in spite of the fact that he could not satisfactorily explain the presence of the Rufinus-Origen passage in the *Tractatus Origenis*.¹⁰⁰

For the first time in a decade, the consensus stood and no new counter-arguments were raised, and the text could be securely attributed to Gregory. Half a century later, a manuscript find by A.C. Vega, while preparing an edition of the text for *España Sagrada*, seemed to confirm the conclusions reached on philological grounds in the early 1900s. In a Visigothic codex, Vega found a fragment of Gregory of Elvira in the writing of the ninth-century poet Alvaro of Cordova, which displays striking parallels with *Tract.* 13.26.

Alvaro of Cordova (Real Academia de la Historia
de Madrid 80, fol. 644^v)

Tractatus Origenis 13.26 (CCSL 69, p. 104)

Sanctus Gregorius Eliberritanus episcopus dicit:
Facie leonis eiusdem domini Ihesu Christi
figuratur; sic enim patriarcha Iacob de eo ait:
dormisti ut leo, somnium comparans passioni eius,
et resurrexisti inquit ut catulus leonis (Gen 49.9).
Sed in Apocalipsin Iohannis dicitur ecce inquit vicit
leo de tribu Iuda radix David (Apoc 5.5). Qui ideo
leo dicitur, quia natura patris in filio est, catulus
leonis appellatur, ut non ipse pater, set filius
crederetur.

Sed quis hic catulus leonis nisi filios dei...de quo
patriarcha Iacob dicebat: dormisti ut leo,
resurrexisti ut catulus leonis (Gen 49.9)? Qui ideo
leo dicitur, qui natura patris in filio est, et ideo
catulus leonis nuncupatur, ut non ipse pater, sed
filius esse credatur. De quo in Apocalipsin Ioannes
apostolus audit...ecce vicit leo de tribu Iuda radix
David (Apoc 5.5).

We may not conclude from this fragment that Alvaro knew the *Tractatus Origenis* under Gregory's name, for he may have been quoting from another of Gregory's works that has since been lost – or, indeed, he may have known the passage second-hand. There are a number of instances in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* and the *Tractatus Origenis* where Gregory offers nearly identical interpretations of the same passage or cluster of passages, such as linking the story of Ruth and Boaz to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb in *Exodus* 12:5 (*Cant.* 3.6; *Tract.* 9.6-7). But the fragment is, at the very least, another piece of evidence in favour of Gregorian authorship of the *Tractatus Origenis*.

¹⁰⁰ Butler '*Tractatus de Epitalamio*', pp.450-459. P. LeJay, 'L'Héritage', pp. 439-42, likewise was definitively convinced by Wilmar's case.

3. The *Tractatus Origenis* in Recent Scholarship

The matter thus seemed to be resolved, with V. Bulhart printing the *Tractatus Origenis* as genuinely Gregorian in the *Corpus Christianorum* edition of the Spanish bishop's works.¹⁰¹ Several decades later, however, scholars again began to engage with the problem of Origen's influence, first raised by Butler and ultimately left unresolved. As I mentioned in the introduction, three main hypotheses were put forth to attempt some kind of satisfactory resolution to the problem. Again, they are: (1) Gregory, despite being *in extrema senectute* in the 380s, lived and preached well into the first decade of the fifth century, and had access to a wide range of Jerome's and Rufinus' translation of Origen, including the *Homilies on Genesis*; (2) Someone other than Gregory wrote the *Tractatus Origenis*; and (3) Gregory and Rufinus both made use of an early, possibly third century, Latin translation of Origen, which has since been lost.

It is, however, safe to say that the denial of Gregorian authorship is by far the minority opinion and unlikely to persuade many. The manuscript and philological evidence, though they may not be entirely conclusive, do make Gregory by far the most likely candidate. Interestingly, G. Heidl, the main proponent of this theory, still locates the *Tractatus Origenis* in the fourth century and argues that its author made use of an intermediary Latin source. He denies that Gregory is the author almost entirely on the basis of the use of the term *substantia*.¹⁰² He notes that Gregory, a staunch defender of Nicaea, 'repeatedly used such expressions as the Greek *homoousion*, and the Latin *trinitas unius substantiae*; *tres personae unius substantiae*; *substantiae unitas*; *pater et filius unius substantiae* etc. None of these expressions occur in the *Tractatus*, even though there are clear allusions to Nicene dogma'.¹⁰³ The author of the *Tractatus* does use the term *substantia*, but it refers exclusively 'to the nature of a being' and not 'divine

¹⁰¹ CCSL 69.

¹⁰² G. Heidl, 'Some Traces of an Ancient Latin Compilation of Origen's Commentary on Genesis' *REAug* 46 (2000), pp. 3-30.

¹⁰³ Heidl, 'Traces', p. 7.

essence'.¹⁰⁴ Heidl is correct about the use of *substantia* in the *Tractatus*, but this point cannot be the lynch-pin of the argument against Gregorian authorship. First, the use of *substantia* to refer to the 'nature of a being' is not inappropriate in Late Latin, and it in no way precludes a more technically theological use of the term elsewhere. Secondly, Gregory does use the term *natura* in two key passages in a way that seems to be synonymous with the technical use of *substantia* in the *De Fide* (*Tract.* 3.33; 6.35). More significantly, however, Heidl is silent about a crucial point related to his argument. In the second version of the *De Fide*, Gregory began to employ *essentia* in place of *substantia* to refer to that which is shared by Father and Son.¹⁰⁵ Gregory's newfound preference for *essentia* may possibly explain his comfort with a less precise use of the term *substantia* in the *Tractatus Origenis*.

The claim that Gregory lived well into the fifth century is the simplest and, perhaps for this reason, the most compelling hypothesis. No source records the date of Gregory's death, so it is not impossible that he lived long enough to read Rufinus' translations of Origen. Indeed, no less an authority on Latin patristic exegesis than M. Dulaey has written that this is the only reasonable conclusion to draw.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, we must reckon with the fact that Gregory would have been *at least* in his eighties at this point – not an impossible age to undertake an ambitious course of preaching using newly-made translations, but not an entirely likely one either. How, moreover, can we explain Gregory's use of a passage from Origen's *Genesis* commentary that, to our knowledge, never crossed over into the Latin tradition? There must have been some conduit of Origen's thought that Gregory read and which has since been lost.

Gregory's use of a non-extant translation of Origen has, therefore, become a congenial solution to the problem. P. LeJay first proposed the solution, although only in passing, in 1908, just after A. Wilmart's groundbreaking article.¹⁰⁷ It allows scholars to

¹⁰⁴ Heidl, 'Traces', p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., *De Fide* 32, 35, 38, 51, 53. See also R.P.C. Hanson, *Search*, p. 521. The term *essentia* is not found in either the *Tractatus Origenis* or *Tractatus de Epithalamio*.

¹⁰⁶ M. Dulaey, 'Grégoire d'Elvire et le *Commentaire sur la Genèse de Victorin de Poetovio*' *Augustinus* 38 (1993), p. 203, n.3: 'C'est en fait Grégoire qui, vers la fin de sa vie, lit Origène dans la traduction de Rufin... Cela suppose évidemment que Grégoire vivait encore au début du Ve siècle'.

¹⁰⁷ P. LeJay, 'L'Héritage', p. 445.

locate the *Tractatus Origenis* during a time we can be certain that he was actively preaching and writing – the 350s-380s – while explaining a parallel with a text that he, in all likelihood, was not alive to read. Here too, however, the questions begin to mount. First, and perhaps most obviously, why do we have absolutely no evidence of any such translation ever being made? G. Heidl responds that there were a number of translations undertaken in Late Antiquity of Greek texts that are no longer extant, and which we know about only by a single mention – there must, he surmises, have been many more, including translations of Christian texts, that were never documented.¹⁰⁸ But this does not change the fact that we are wading into the purely hypothetical. Indeed, the objection cannot be so easily brushed off, as Jerome makes a point of specifically documenting all the authors who transmitted Origen's writings to the West, mentioning the likes of Victorinus of Poetovio and Hilary of Poitiers, who simply incorporated Origen's ideas into their own commentaries rather than producing translations as such. Secondly, and equally problematic, to *which* translated text(s) did Gregory have access? E. Schulz-Flügel has argued that the source is a Latin translation or compilation of Origen's *Commentary on Galatians*, since the most extensive parallels concern the playing (*lusus*) of Ismael and Isaac.¹⁰⁹ This theme appears in Jerome's *Commentary on Galatians*,¹¹⁰ which, by his own admission, incorporates much from Origen.¹¹¹ But this suggestion leaves the problem of the first *Tractatus* unresolved. Heidl has proposed a Latin compilation of Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* undertaken by Novatian, but he focuses solely on the first *Tractatus*, evading entirely the problem that the parallel material in the third comes from Origen's *Homilies*.¹¹² We must, it seems, posit the existence of *at least* two translations of Origen's works that circulated widely enough for

¹⁰⁸ G. Heidl, 'Traces', p. 28.

¹⁰⁹ Schulz-Flügel, pp. 256-67.

¹¹⁰ *Ad Galatas* 2.4.29-31 (CCSL 77A, p. 144): *Non puto invenire nos posse ubi Ismahel persecutus fuerit Isaac, sed tantum illud quod, cum filius Aegyptiae, qui maior natu erat, luderet cum Isaac, indignata sit Sara.*

¹¹¹ Jerome, *Ad Galatas* praef. (CCSL 77A, p. 6): *Quin potius in eo, ut mihi videor, cautior atque timidior, quod imbecillitatem virium mearum sentiens Origenis Commentarios sum secutus. Scripsit enim ille vir in epistolam Pauli ad Galatas quinque proprie volumina et decimum Stromatum suorum librum commatice super explanatione eius sermone complevit; Tractatus quoque varios et Excerpta, quae vel sola possent sufficere, composuit.* On Jerome's use of Origen in the *Commentary*, see M.A. Schatkin, 'The Influence of Origen upon St. Jerome's *Commentary on Galatians*', *VC* 24/1 (1970), pp. 49-58.

¹¹² Heidl, 'Traces', p. 29.

Gregory to have read them, but subsequently disappeared entirely from the historical record.

4. The Shared Source(s) of Gregory and Rufinus

I believe that the latter hypothesis comes closest to solving the problem, but it brings us far too deeply into the realm of conjecture. A perfectly tenable solution along similar lines can, however, be offered, which relies entirely upon texts that we know to have existed. The error that previous scholars who support the common-source hypothesis have made, I believe, is the insistence that the source must be a translation or compilation. As I noted above, the earliest documented Latin exegetes to mediate Origen's writings to the West did not produce translations, but rather composed commentaries based upon the Alexandrian's writings. This, I think, is the most likely explanation.

Certainly, there is no obstacle in surmising that Gregory incorporated material from earlier Latin commentaries verbatim into his homilies, for we have ample evidence of this.¹¹³ But can the same be said of Rufinus' translations? Much ink has been spilled on the subject of Rufinus' reliability as a translator, with much disagreement.¹¹⁴ Rather than get side tracked in a dense and lengthy analysis of that broad question, it strictly concerns us to determine whether it is plausible to suppose that Rufinus integrated other Latin sources into his own *Homilies on Genesis*. Whatever one can say about Rufinus' method of translation, it is clear that he never intended to produce a word-for-word – or even closely idiomatic – translation of the Greek text in front of him. In the preface to his translation the *De Principiis*, he acknowledges that he has suppressed certain unorthodox elements of the Greek text, asserting that they were later heretical

¹¹³ See Vona, *Gregorio di Elvira*.

¹¹⁴ See the helpful surveys in M. Wagner, *Rufinus the Translator: A Study of his Theory and his Practice as illustrated in his Version of the Apologetica of St. Gregory Nazianzen* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1945), pp. 1-22; and, more recently, R. Heine, 'Introduction', in *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1982), pp. 30-9.

interpolations, and that he has replaced them with more acceptable theology.¹¹⁵ He stresses, however, that when he reworks a corrupted passage into a more orthodox form or attempts to clarify something that is obscure, he uses statements from other works of Origen, rather than composing something of his own.¹¹⁶ Perhaps more innocuously, he admits to abbreviating Origen's commentaries when translating them, for their length would simply not allow him reasonably to undertake a complete translation.¹¹⁷ Conversely, and of particular relevance for our study, Rufinus claims that he has also added passages to certain of his translations of Origen's exegetical works. Regarding the *Commentary on Romans*, this need arose from his difficulty in obtaining all the volumes of Origen's commentary from the booksellers.¹¹⁸ But he also asserts, in the *peroratio* to the *Romans* commentary, that he has added passages to his translations of the homilies on *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Leviticus*, although for a slightly different reason: 'We desired to fill out [*supplere*] those things that were discoursed [*perorata sunt*] by Origen *ex tempore* in the *auditorium* of the church, in which his intention was edification, more so than explanation. We did this for the homilies – or, little speeches, rather – on *Genesis* and *Exodus*, and especially in those delivered by him on the book of *Leviticus stylo dicta*, we have translated in the mode [*specie*] of explanation [*explanandi*]. We have taken up, therefore, that labour of filling up [*adimplendi*] what

¹¹⁵ In so doing, he claims that he is but following the example of Jerome: *Hunc ergo etiam nos, licet non eloquentiae viribus, disciplinae tamen regulis in quantum possumus sequimur, servantes scilicet ne ea, quae in libris Origenis a se ipso discrepantia inveniuntur atque contraria, proferamus* (DP praef. Ruf. 2; Koetschau, p. 4).

¹¹⁶ DP praef. Ruf. 3 (Koetschau, p. 5): *Si qua sane velut peritis iam et scientibus loquens, dum breviter transire vult, obscurius protulit, nos, ut manifestior fieret locus, ea quae de ipsa re in aliis eius libris apertius legeramus adiecimus explanationi studentes. Nihil tamen nostrum diximus, sed licet in aliis locis dicta, sua tamen sibi reddidimus.*

¹¹⁷ He makes this specific claim regarding the *Comentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos*, in the *praefatio ad Heraclium* (FC 2/1, p. 58): *Addis autem, ne quid laboribus meis desit, ut omne hoc quindecim voluminum corpus, quod Graecus sermo ad quadraginta fere aut eo amplius milia versuum produxerit, abbreviem et ad media, si fieri potest, spatia coartem.* According to J. Scherer, *Le Commentaire d'Origène sur Rom. in. 5-v. 7 d'après les Extraits du Papyrus no. 88748 du Musée du Caire et les Fragments de la Philocalie et du Vaticanus gr. 762: Essai de Reconstitution du Texte et de la Pensée des Tomes V et VI du 'Commentaire sur Épître aux Romains'* (Cairo, 1957), Rufinus overstepped the boundaries of acceptable abbreviation and omitted certain passages deliberately to conceal Origen's unorthodox theology. H. Chadwick, 'Rufinus and the Tura Papyrus Fragment of Origen's Commentary on Romans' *JTS* 10/1 (1959), pp. 10-42 offers a detailed and compelling refutation of Scherer's criticism.

¹¹⁸ *In Rom.* Praef. Ruf. (FC 2/1, p. 58): *Desunt enim fere apud omnium bibliothecas – incertum sane quo casu – aliquanta ex ipso corpore volumina.*

was lacking [*deest*].¹¹⁹ He goes on to say that he translated the homilies on *Joshua*, *Judges*, and the *Psalms* ‘straightforwardly as we found them [*simpliciter ut invenimus*]’ and ‘without much labour [*non multo cum labore*]’.

We have thus established several facts about Rufinus’ method of translation relevant to our study. First, he had no compunction about deviating from the Greek text in his Latin translation, whether his intent was to adapt a seemingly unorthodox passage, clarify something that Origen had left obscure, abbreviate a lengthy discourse, or add substance to an *ex tempore* lecture that lacked sufficient explanation of the biblical text. Secondly, when he did add something to a homily, it was his preference to interpolate passages from other works of Origen. Thirdly, the *Homilies on Genesis* is one of the translations that Rufinus singles out as an example of this practice of deliberate interpolation – or, indeed, of re-writing. We do not have any admission by Rufinus that he utilized other Latin translations, paraphrases, or commentaries based upon Origen to ‘fill up what was lacking’, but there is no reason why he could not have done so, given how great a *labor* he states that the task is and how much extra work those additional translations would entail. There is, moreover, another pragmatic reason. Origen’s *Commentary on Genesis* would have been an ideal source for this additional material, and copies may have been far more difficult to come by than a Latin translation or paraphrase. He has already admitted to difficulty in obtaining all the books of Origen’s *Romans* commentary.

There is, in the historical record, only one known paraphrase of Origen’s *Genesis* commentary – Victorinus of Poetovio’s *Commentary on Genesis*. I propose that this text is the common source. Positing that Gregory and Rufinus both drew upon Victorinus’ *Genesis* commentary has four important advantages over the other hypotheses. First, even though the text is now lost, we can be certain that it did once exist.¹²⁰ Secondly, Jerome mentions numerous times that Victorinus composed his commentaries based on those of Origen.¹²¹ Thirdly, we do not need to surmise the existence of multiple translations of Origen, all of which have subsequently disappeared from the historical

¹¹⁹ *Per. Ruf.* (PG 14:1292-94).

¹²⁰ Jerome, *De Vir Ill.* 74.

¹²¹ See the discussion in chapter one.

record. Fourthly, it is likely from the parallels between Gregory's homilies and Victorinus' *in Apocalypsin* and *De Fabrica Mundi* that Gregory knew his work well.¹²²

We may thus conclude that Gregory did indeed compose the *Tractatus Origenis*, or at least all the homilies contained therein, without proposing that Gregory lived into the early years of the fifth century and was reliant upon the Latin translations of Origen by Rufinus. The Origenian elements in Gregory's writings can be attributed to an intermediary Latin source, very likely the *Commentary on Genesis* of Victorinus of Poetovio. A firm date, however, still eludes us, for it is likely that the *Tractatus Origenis*, haphazard a collection as it is, was compiled after Gregory's death from sermons that were not necessarily delivered at or around the same time.

5. Conclusions

The long and winding road that we have travelled of dense text-critical and philological analysis of the *Tractatus Origenis* and the conclusions that we have reached can help us

¹²² M. Dulaey, 'Grégoire', pp. 203-19, explores at length the parallels between the first six homilies in the *Tractatus Origenis* and Victorinus' *in Apocalypsin*. On the basis of those similarities and Gregory's likely ignorance of Greek, she posits that the instances where Gregory is dependent upon Hippolytus and Irenaeus can be explained with reference to Victorinus' *Commentary on Genesis*, which she proposes Gregory also knew. Indeed, she asserts, 'Grégoire peut être considéré comme un témoin important de l'oeuvre l'évêque de Poetovio' (p. 219). There is, moreover, a clear parallel, not adduced by Dulaey, between Gregory's allegorical exegesis in the *De Arca Noe* of the seven clean animals brought aboard the ark by Noah and Victorinus' numerological reflections on the seven days of creation in his *De Fabrica Mundi*:

Victorinus, <i>De Fabrica Mundi</i> 8 (SC 423, p. 146)	Gregory, <i>De Arca Noe</i> 7 (CCSL 69, p. 150)
Ecce septem cornula agnui, <u>septem oculi Dei</u> , septem oculi stagni, septem spiritus, septem faces ardentes ante thronum Dei, <u>septem candelabra aurea</u> , septem oviculae, <u>septem mulieres</u> apud Esaiam, septem ecclesiae apud Paulum, septem diacones, <u>septem angeli</u> , <u>septem tubae</u> , septem signacula libri, septem septimanae item sexaginta Pentecoste concluditur... <u>septem columnae sapientiae in domum Solomonis</u> .	Sed et <u>septem oculi domini</u> et septem stellae in dextera sedentis in trono et <u>septem candelabra aurea</u> et septem lucernae in tabernaculo domini et <u>septem angeli</u> , <u>septem tubae</u> , septem fialae, <u>septem mulieres</u> adprehendentes hominem unum, id est virtutes ecclesiae Christum tenentes et <u>septem columnae apud Solomonem</u> , quibus domus ecclesiae fulcitur atque erigitur.

Although many images are drawn from Revelation, it is likely that Gregory is reliant upon Victorinus' text because the 'seven eyes of God/the Lord' is taken from *Zach* 4:10 and the 'seven columns of Solomon' is from *Prov* 9:1.

better to understand Gregory's composition of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. That text, too, contains interpretations of certain passages that resemble closely those of Origen, but there is no longer need to propose that Gregory knew the Alexandrian's *Commentary* or *Homilies* directly. Gregory's use of an intermediary Latin source – again, likely Victorinus – can be proposed as a likely explanation. Not only does this observation help us to establish the proper background against which the *de Epithalamio* should be interpreted, it allows us – cautiously – to use the *de Epithalamio* as a source in reconstructing the early Latin tradition of Song exegesis. This will be the task of chapters five and six. We are not, however, quite finished with the problem of Origen's influence. Gregory's hermeneutics have been pegged as thoroughly and deeply Origenian, and it has been proposed by a number of venerable scholars that, for this more conceptual and theological reason, he was intimately familiar with Origen's works – most likely in Latin translation. It is the task of the following chapter to address this problem.

CHAPTER FOUR

GREGORY'S BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Although the extant exegetical corpus of Gregory of Elvira outstrips in volume that of every Latin writer in the period prior to Ambrose and Jerome with the exception of Hilary of Poitiers, his hermeneutics and exegetical method have received little scholarly analysis. Where they have been studied, the emphasis falls upon the supposedly 'Origenian' quality of his exegesis. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that this should be so. Both his collection of twenty homilies on Scripture and his sermon *De Arca Noe* were transmitted under the name of the Alexandrian theologian, suggesting some sort of close relationship. Indeed, the venerable H. de Lubac remarks, 'The Spanish Saint Gregory, bishop of Elvira (Illiberis, Granada), who probably lived to the very end of the fourth century, was so imbued with Origen's hermeneutics and themes that some excellent critics were able at first to take a collection of his sermons...for *Treatises of Origen*'.¹ M. Simonetti adds that Gregory's indebtedness to Origen likely came through his engagement with the translations of Jerome and Rufinus.² This sentiment is echoed in the studies of J. Pasqual Torr , ³ J.A.M. G mez,⁴ and F.J. Tovar Paz⁵. But this is a point more presumed than argued, evidenced by the lack of any comparative study of their hermeneutics and exegetical method.

There are, I would argue, two significant reasons for this lacuna. First, there is a lack of clarity concerning what constitutes 'hermeneutics' and 'method'. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, there are several passages in the *Tractatus Origenis* that can be traced directly back to Origen's *Commentary* and *Homilies on Genesis*. There is thus undeniably 'Origenian' material in Gregory's exegetical writings.

¹ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: Volume 1* (trans. M. Sebanc; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998 [1959]), p. 156.

² M. Simonetti, 'Gregory of Elvira', in *Patrology, Vol. 4* (ed. A. Di Bernardino, trans. P. Solari; South Bend, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1986), pp. 84-9.

³ Pasqual Torr , pp. 13-19; idem, *Gregorio de Elvira: Commentario al Cantar de los Cantares y Otros Tratados Exeg ticos* (Fuentes Patristicas 13; Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2000), pp. 16-21.

⁴ G mez, *Ex gesis*, pp. 73-109.

⁵ F.J. Tovar Paz, *Tractatus, Sermones Atque Homiliae: El cultivo del g nero literario del discurso homiletico en la Hispania tardoantigua y visigoda* (Badajoz: Universidad de Extremadura, 1994).

But this borrowing has been improperly assumed to signify a wholesale appropriation of Origen's hermeneutics, which is not necessarily the case, especially when the evidence strongly suggests that Gregory knew this material from an intermediary Latin source, and not from texts of Origen himself (Greek or Latin). Secondly, Gregory has left us with no hermeneutical treatise, so we must reconstruct his doctrine of Scripture and exegetical method entirely through his 'practice' – all too often in scholarship only a handful of passages, particularly those that sound most like Origen, receive any attention. One glaring example comes from the fifth *Tractatus*, in which Gregory says that Scripture has a *triplicem significantiam*. Every scholar writing on the subject has seized on this passage as concrete evidence of Origen's influence, although, as I shall argue below, it has been misread and Gregory does not intend it to mean three 'senses' in Scripture. The dependence is presumed to be so patent that no further study is necessary.

The aims of this chapter, therefore, are threefold: first, to give as detailed an account as possible of Gregory's doctrine of Scripture and exegetical method, through an analysis of a broad range of his homilies; secondly, to articulate the distinctive elements of Origen's exegetical method, particularly through a study of *De Principiis* 4.1-3; and, thirdly, to offer a brief comparative analysis. I shall demonstrate that none of the distinctive features of Origen's hermeneutics are evident in any of Gregory's writings and that there is consequently no reason to propose that Gregory had any direct knowledge of Origen or that his hermeneutics are distinctly 'Origenian'. In this chapter, I hope to make a contribution to Gregorian studies more broadly, by offering a more nuanced account of his biblical interpretation, but I also wish to lay the groundwork for our study of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* in the following chapter, which cannot be adequately undertaken without a proper understanding of his hermeneutics and method.

1. Gregory's Hermeneutics in Modern Scholarship

Before turning to an analysis of Gregory's works, it will be helpful to consider some important contemporary assessments of Gregory's exegesis. Simonetti's account is very

brief, comprising roughly one page, but its influence far exceeds its length. It is one of the very few considerations of Gregory's biblical hermeneutics available in English (in translation), it occurs in the fourth volume of Quasten's *Patrology*, which is one of the standard references for patristic literature, and it has been adopted nearly verbatim in Charles Kannengiesser's *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*.⁶ He is quite clear that Gregory follows 'Origen's criteria of interpretation, which [he] already advanced in age, could have learned from the translations of Jerome and Rufinus'.⁷ Simonetti is not entirely clear what these uniquely Origenian criteria are, but the four decisive proofs of Origen's influence appear to be: 1) Gregory's tendency to interpret the Old Testament in a 'predominantly allegorical fashion'; 2) his ability to 'distinguish in the Old Testament a *triplicem significantiam*'; 3) his desire to 'discover the spiritual sense of Scripture which is hidden under the veil of the letter and often escapes the *simpliciores*'; and 4) and his emphasis upon the '*defectus litterae*'.⁸ The first observation is relatively unconvincing, for figural readings of the Old Testament are standard in nearly all Latin biblical exegesis from the time of Tertullian. Gregory, moreover, only rarely uses the term *allegoria* to describe his exegesis. The second and fourth observations are, however, important to note, for we shall encounter them again. In particular, the notion that Gregory has a 'threefold' hermeneutic seems clearly to indicate Origen's influence, and this passage accordingly comes to bear much weight. But, as we shall see below, the passage has been misinterpreted to mean that Gregory discerns three discrete 'senses' in scripture, which he does not. Indeed, there is little reason for taking this phrase as representing some implicit, yet nevertheless well-developed, hermeneutic: he elsewhere refers to the scriptural text as having a *duplicem significantiam* (*Tract.* 3.12) and a *quadruplicem figuram* (*Tract.* 2.2). Likewise, the notion of the *defectus litterae* is not a normative hermeneutical principle that Gregory applies elsewhere. Although the phrase is clearly dependent upon Origen's *Homily on Genesis* 7.5, I have demonstrated

⁶ C. Kannengiesser (ed.). *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity, Volume Two* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 1017.

⁷ Simonetti, 'Gregory of Elvira', p. 88.

⁸ Simonetti, 'Gregory of Elvira', pp. 87-8.

above the likelihood that Gregory simply borrowed a long portion of Victorinus of Poetovio's *Commentary on Genesis* in which it was embedded.

Simonetti's third observation, moreover, is profoundly misleading. Although the language of 'hidden under a veil' and meaning escaping the '*simpliciores*' sounds deeply Origenian, in the passages cited by Simonetti Gregory does not use the former term at all and the latter in a way quite different from Origen (*Tract.* 8.1; 11.2; 16.8-9; 17.3; 19.12). Certainly, the majority of the passages that Simonetti references do testify to the opacity of scripture, with the significant exception of *Tract.* 17.3, but this does not set Gregory apart from other Latin exegetes.⁹ Gregory, however, never follows Origen in reading the veiling of Moses upon his descent from Sinai (*Exod* 34:33) as signifying the veiling of the text of Scripture, so that its true meaning was hidden from the Jews and only revealed with the coming of Christ.¹⁰ Thus to state that Gregory thought that the meaning of scripture was 'hidden under a veil' is to invoke, misleadingly, specifically Origenian terminology, with its own web of inter-textual associations, that Gregory himself never uses.

Origen, moreover, conceives of the *simpliciores* – 'simple-minded Christians' – as a discrete category of individuals, parallel to 'Jews' and 'heretics', who are unable to penetrate the mysteries of the Scripture.¹¹ Gregory, in the two instances in his extant preaching where he refers to the *simplices/simpliciores*, accuses them of holding incorrect doctrines, but these, he states, can be discerned from the 'literal' sense of scripture. The first occurrence is in the course of his homily on *Ezekiel* 37, which speaks of the valley of the dry bones that come to life through the preaching of the prophet. Gregory remarks that the 'reading is simple...which was not written allegorically, but placed as an example for the believers'.¹² It promises 'the hope of resurrection in our same body'.¹³ Not all, however, follow the plain meaning of this

⁹ See, e.g., Victorinus of Poetovio, *Apoc.* 5.2 (SC 423, pp. 74-6); Hilary, *Tractatus De Titulo Psalmi XCI* 1 (PL 9:494A); *Tract. Ps. CXVIII Prima Littera* 5 (PL 9:506A), *Littera XVII* 12 (PL 9:619B).

¹⁰ *DP* 1.1.2.

¹¹ *DP* 4.2.1-2.

¹² *Tract.* 17.2 (CCSL 69, p. 123): *Simplex est quidem lectio haec, sanctissimi fratres, quae non per allegoriam scripta est, sed ad exemplum credentium posita.*

¹³ *Tract.* 17.2 (CCSL 69, p. 123): *Spem quoque resurrectionis in eodem corpore repromittens.*

passage under the influence of ‘rapacious wolves’: these heretics ‘seduce and wound the simple-minded [*simplices*] with their discourses, as the serpent did Eve, while they interpret the simplicity [*simplicitatem*] of the heavenly words according to the understanding of their own will [*per voluntatis suae sensum*] and not according to the perfection of the truth [*pro veritatis ipsius absolute*], denying, as I have said, the resurrection of the flesh’.¹⁴ The simple-minded, on this account, are not being led away from a belief in the resurrection of the body by some obscure passages of scripture that require a ‘spiritual’ interpretation in order to be correctly understood; on the contrary, the scriptural testimony is clear and straightforward, but Christians are being deceived by the malice of heretics, who read alien meanings into the text *per voluntatis suae sensum* to support their own doctrines. The second occurrence is in his homily on *Zach* 3:1-4, in which ‘Jesus the high priest [*Ihesum sacerdotem magnum*]’ stands before God and is opposed by ‘the devil [*diabolus*]’.¹⁵ Gregory notes that a portion of the reading, following an address of rebuke to ‘the devil’, causes particular interpretive difficulty for the reader: ‘*Is not the firebrand taken out of the fire (Zach 3:2)?*’ He continues to say that ‘many of the simpler ones [*simpliciores*] think that the devil himself is taken out of the fire, when the devil not only is not taken out of the fire, but is damned in the eternal fire’.¹⁶ The sequence of words leads the reader to believe that even the devil will attain redemption, which Gregory considers an entirely impious doctrine. For Gregory, the issue for the interpreter is to determine ‘to whom this is said or prophesied’.¹⁷

The concrete links between Origen and Gregory’s hermeneutics are, on closer analysis, rather less convincing than Simonetti proposes. Gregory’s propensity for figural reading, his conviction that the meaning of Scripture can at times be opaque, and his displeasure at the theological error of ‘simple’ Christians do not require direct and

¹⁴ *Tract.* 17.3 (CCSL 69, pp. 123-4).

¹⁵ *Tract.* 19.1 (CCSL 69, p. 137).

¹⁶ *Tract.* 19.12 (CCSL 69, p. 139): *Sed quid subiungat audite: Nonne, inquit, titio extractus ab igne est? Cui hoc dicitur vel praedicatur debemus advertere. Certe ad diabulum dicebat: Increpet in te dominus, diabule, qui elegit Ierusalem. Numquid et huic dicitur: Nonne hic titio extractus ab igne est? Quod quidem multi simpliciores putant, quod ipsum diabulum titionem extractum ab igne dixerit, cum diabolus non solum ab igne extractus non sit, sed in aeterno igne damnatus sit, dicente domino: Ite in ignem aeternum, quem praeparavit pater meus diabolo et angelis eius (Mt 25:41).*

¹⁷ *Tract.* 19.12 (CCSL, 69, p.139).

thorough engagement with Origen's works. Indeed, Simonetti's conclusions reflect a problem common to assessments of Gregory's hermeneutics: they require all the various fragments of his biblical exposition to be dated no earlier than 380, although his career as a preacher would have begun more than two decades earlier and cannot have lasted long after this date. We are left to wonder why not a scrap of this earlier preaching has survived.

J. Pasqual Torró translated the entirety of the Gregorian corpus for publication in the Spanish series *Fuentes Patristicas* in three volumes. In the introductions to the volumes of exegetical writings, he offers brief analyses of Gregory's exegetical method. His assessment is rather more sober and careful than that of Simonetti, but ultimately he posits a strong relationship between Gregory and Origen. For Pasqual Torró, the first and most important hermeneutical principle for Gregory is the interpretation of scripture by scripture.¹⁸ This principle is founded upon his belief in the unity of scriptural revelation, which is a 'procedimiento exegético muy antiguo'.¹⁹ Gregory, he notes, holds the New Testament in higher esteem than the Old, for the latter prefigures the former; this is demonstrated by his use of the nouns *typus*, *imago*, *figura*, *similitudo*, and *allegoria* and the verbs *indicare*, *monstrare*, and *significare*.²⁰ Gregory's emphasis upon the unity of the two testaments, which allows him to interpret passages of scripture in the light of other passages of scripture, places him squarely in the Latin interpretive tradition. Pasqual Torró, moreover, like Simonetti, takes Gregory's hermeneutical formula in *Tractatus* 5.1 as normative, referring to it as 'una formulación muy precisa de los sentidos de la Escritura veterotestamentaria'.²¹ He notes further that Gregory

¹⁸ Pasqual Torró, *Commentario al Commentar*, p. 19: 'Por lo demás, el primer principio hermenéutico al que se atiene s. Gregorio es el de interpretar la Escritura con la Escritura'; cf. *Tratados*, p. 17: 'Supuesta la unidad de la revelación, porque un mismo y único Espíritu inspira ambos Testamentos, la interpretación de la Escritura con la Escritura es el primero de los principios hermenéuticos que invoca s. Gregorio.'

¹⁹ Pasqual Torró, *Commentario al Commentar*, p. 19; cf. *Tratados*, p. 18: 'La lectura cristológica heredada de la antigua tradición exegética de los siglos II y III'.

²⁰ Pasqual Torró, *Commentario al Commentar*, p. 18-19: 'Gregorio reconoce una superioridad del evangelio con respecto al antiguo Testamento, una excelencia de los preceptos de Cristo en relación a las prescripciones de Moisés... Los terminus *typus*, *imago*, *figura*, *similitudo*, *allegoria* para Gregorio son equivalentes. Todos ellos <<indican realidades veterotestamentarias que prefiguran las neotestamentarias>>'.

²¹ Pasqual Torró, *Commentario al Commentar*, p. 20; cf. *Tratados*, p. 17: 'Y respecto a los sentidos de la Escritura escribe en el *Tractatus* V'.

interprets certain texts only allegorically (e.g., *Exod* 12:5), whereas in others he discerns only a literal sense (e.g., *Ezek* 37:1-4).²²

Pasqual Torró ultimately sees in Gregory two predominant strands of influence: his exegetical method is primarily Alexandrian, specifically Origenian, and his doctrine bears the stamp of ‘Asiatic’ theology. Gregory has brought these two ‘distinct traditions’ together in his homilies.²³ Pasqual Torró is, however, silent on which features of Gregory’s hermeneutics and doctrine are specifically Origenian and Irenaean. His remark, moreover, that Gregory united the Origenian and Irenaean strands in his exegetical writings demonstrates an all-too-common ignorance of earlier Latin biblical interpretation. As we demonstrated in Part One, Victorinus of Poetovio, nearly a century before Gregory, drew heavily upon Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen in his commentaries, effecting the very integration that Pasqual Torró imputes to Gregory; as Dulaey notes, ‘La culture de l’évêque de Poetovio ne se bornait pas à ces sources archaïques désormais perdues, et ell n’avait rien de rétrograde. Certes, il avait lu les auteurs chrétiens les plus anciens, comme Théophile et Justin, mais il était aussi profondément imprégné d’Irénée, Hippolyte, et meme Origène’.²⁴ Indeed, one can say that Latin exegesis, nearly from its inception, has been marked by its indebtedness to these different strands of theological influence.

The most substantial treatment of Gregory’s hermeneutics is J.A.M. Gómez’s *La Exégesis Como Instrumento de Creación Cultural: El Testimonio de las Obras de Gregorio de Elbira*.²⁵ Gómez focuses upon what we might term the ‘pastoral’ dimension of Gregory’s biblical exegesis, exploring how scripture, for Gregory, is the ‘clave en la vida todo el género humano’.²⁶ It is thus not Gregory’s doctrine that is of primary interest to Gómez, but rather the totality of his vision of human life, as developed from his interpretation of the Bible. He situates Gregory’s conception that ‘verdad está

²² Pasqual Torró, *Commentario al Commentar*, p. 20.

²³ Gómez, *Tratados*, p. 18: ‘Y aunque se constatan influencias alejandrinas, y concretamente origenianas, sobre todo en la exégesis, en lo doctrinal predomina la teología asiática. En definitiva, Gregorio ha sabido reunir y aunar sin estridencias distintas tradiciones.

²⁴ M. Dulaey, *Premier Exégète* I, p. 278. See the copious examples provided on pp. 278-95 for strong support of this assertion.

²⁵ Gómez, *Exégesis*, esp. pp. 73-109.

²⁶ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 73.

encerrada en un libro, o en un conjunto de libros', in a trajectory of 'filosofía exegética' that stretches from Hellenistic antiquity to the Latin Middle Ages.²⁷ In attempting to place Gregory's biblical interpretation in such a broad context, however, Gómez's account is utterly overwhelmed by the amount of material, much of it irrelevant or anachronistic, which he attempts to cover. For example, he inexplicably references John Cassian's 'four-fold' interpretation of the 'city of Jerusalem' and the medieval ditty '*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*' to explain early Christian understandings of the different 'senses' of Scripture.²⁸ Moreover, he spends several pages covering the conflict between the Alexandrian and Antiochene 'schools' of exegesis, without explaining the possible relevance of this to mid-fourth-century Latin biblical interpretation, generally, or Gregory, specifically.²⁹ The key Latin figures of Tertullian, Cyprian, Victorinus, Hilary and Zeno are strikingly absent, although the Greek writers Philo, Pseudo-Barnabas, Origen, Didymus, and Cyril of Alexandria merit mention. What Gómez provides is a largely incoherent survey of the history of Christian biblical interpretation, rather than a study of the specific background to Gregory's writings.

In his analysis of Gregory's hermeneutics, we find the same themes recurring as in the other literature surveyed. At the heart of his biblical exegesis is the unity of the Old and New Testaments: 'La correcta exégesis...se basaba un presupuesto inicial: la unión entre los dos Testamentos, que es un hecho tenido por cierto, asumido por la tradición patristica'.³⁰ The Old Testament, for Gregory, prophetically reveals the new, although all scripture contains both literal and figural meanings. Again, Gregory's remarks in his fifth *Tractatus* are taken as normative for his hermeneutical procedure: 'En la obra gregoriana existe un triple sentido de herencia origenista, como dice el propio Gregorio de Elbira, *triplicem esse significantiam*'.³¹ Origen is here the decisive

²⁷ Gómez, *Exégesis*, pp. 73ff.

²⁸ Gómez, *Exégesis*, pp. 79-80. John Cassian, *Conl.* 14.8.

²⁹ Gómez, *Exégesis*, pp. 84-6.

³⁰ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 87.

³¹ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 87. As with other the other scholars, Gómez places disproportionate emphasis upon the fifth *Tractatus*, because it, unlike some of the other methodological excurses, seems to resonate

influence upon Gregory, and Gómez singles out Book Four of the *De Principiis* as his principle source. Bizarrely, however, Gómez insists that it was through the translation of Rufinus that Gregory knew the work, although Gregory would have been a very elderly man when the translation was undertaken and disseminated.³² In this account, Gregory is placed alongside Hilary, Ambrose, and Rufinus (but not Victorinus of Poetovio or Eusebius of Vercelli!) as Latin practitioners of Origenist exegesis.³³

There are, however, some valuable insights in Gómez's account. He is right to point to the pastoral and soteriological aims of Gregory's exegesis: 'En la lectura de la Biblia se encuentran las claves de la salvación humana (*salutis nostrae*) dispuestas desde antiguo (*a saeculis antiquis dispositum*)...de manera que de su interpretación se colige el mensaje de la salvación'.³⁴ Again, Gómez rightly notes that it was the *auctoritas* of the *beatus apostolus Paulus*, whom Gregory refers to as *grammaticus noster ac peritissimus legis* at *de Epithalamio* 1.3 and frequently praises elsewhere, which Gregory uses to justify and ground his Christological-soteriological interpretation of Scripture, particularly of the Old Testament.³⁵

The classicist Francisco Javier Tovar Paz in his work on preaching in the Spanish church devotes a substantial section to Gregory, and he provides a lucid and insightful summary of the 'characteristics' of Gregory's exegesis. His approach is rather different from that of the other scholars here surveyed, because he focuses more upon genre, form and composition than on Gregory's methodological statements. Tovar Paz importantly distinguishes between two different genres of 'discursos' employed by Gregory: *sequentiae* and *quaestiones*. The former, typified by the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, involves the sequential exposition of verses from a particular biblical book.³⁶ The *quaestio* genre, by contrast, seeks to answer a general question ('una *quaestio* global')

so closely with Origenist exegesis; he later argues, 'Gregorio de Elbira nos ha legado unas reflexiones sustanciosas sobre su propio método alegórico, la triple significación de las Sagradas Escrituras'.

³² Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 83: 'Aquí establece Orígenes un verdadero legado para la tradición posterior, de la que participa integralmente Gregorio de Elbira...La obra llega a occidente a través de Rufino'.

³³ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 92.

³⁴ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 89.

³⁵ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 89.

³⁶ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 130: 'La disposición de los TRACT. IN CANT. implica una exégesis en *continuum* de los tres primeros cantos del CANTAR...mediante un análisis verso a verso de cada uno de los cantos.

that arises from the reading of a particular passage of scripture ('texto de referencia'), often with secondary questions ('*quaestiones secundarias*') posed and resolved in the course of the discourse.³⁷ The homilies in the *Tractatus Origenis* are an example of this genre. Regarding form and composition, Tovar Paz rejects the possibility that any of Gregory's exegetical writings are liturgical productions, but he acknowledges that some are based on *lectiones*.³⁸ His wording here is unclear, but what Tovar Paz seems to be rejecting is the possibility that any of Gregory's extant sermons can be linked definitively with one of the festal seasons. He qualifies the statement by noting that a sacramental interest functions as a 'núcleo temático' for a large group of homilies in the *Tractatus Origenis*: there is a clear interest in baptism (*Tract.* 15), the priesthood (*Tract.* 19), the eucharist (*Tract.* 9; 10), and the death and resurrection of Christ (*Tract.* 17).³⁹ He notes, moreover, several other smaller thematic groupings of homilies: against heretics (*Tr.* 1); against the Jews (*Tr.* 4; 8); and in praise of the martyrs (*Tr.* 12; 18).

His analysis of Gregory's methodology is careful and precise, although his explanation of the *triplicem significantiam* in the fifth *Tractatus* is not without its problems. He argues that Gregory offers three possible ways of reading scripture: prophetically, historically, and figurally.⁴⁰ But this is to miss the point, which I shall demonstrate below, that prophecy is discerned from literal or figural readings of scripture, not from a 'prophetic' mode of reading that is distinct from those other two. Indeed, he later notes that such a threefold hermeneutic is an aberration in Gregory's writing: 'Los restantes discursos presentan unos proyectos dicotómicos, donde se oponen lo carnal a lo espiritual'.⁴¹ This point, virtually unnoticed by other scholars, is borne out through a close reading of the *Tractatus Origenis*. I would simply add that the fifth *Tractatus* fits into this scheme as well, although Gregory's methodological statement has been misread as indicating a threefold hermeneutic.

³⁷ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, pp. 130-1.

³⁸ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 131: 'En párrafos anteriores se concluyó que los *tractatus* de Gregorio de Elvira no tienen una orientación litúrgica, a pesar de que algunos se basen en *lectiones*.'

³⁹ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 131.

⁴⁰ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 132: 'En cuanto a los planteamientos exegéticos, el discurso n. 5 permite establecer las tres posibilidades de lectura aplicables'.

⁴¹ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 132.

Tovar Paz concludes by emphasizing Gregory's privileged place as the first Spanish author of 'discursos gramaticales cristianos', and as one of the pioneers of the genre in Latin Christianity. He argues, moreover, that it is 'certain' that Gregory was influenced by 'la tradición de Orígenes'. What he means by this tradition is rather less than clear. Is he proposing, along with the other scholars here surveyed, that Gregory's methodology is Origenian? Or, does he mean more generally that portions of Gregory's homilies originated with Origen, as was certainly the case? Tovar Paz is, in any event, agnostic about the source of Gregory's knowledge of Origen: 'a pesar de que ésta le llegó por cauces desconocidos'.⁴² His ambiguity, however, highlights the distinct problems in referring to Gregory as an 'Origenian'.

2. Gregory's Hermeneutical Theory and Exegetical Method in the *Tractatus Origenis* and *Tractatus de Arca Noe*

Gregory's remarks in the fifth *Tractatus* regarding the *triplicem significantiam* of scripture have been seized upon by nearly every scholar writing on Gregory's biblical interpretation as a complete and normative summary of his hermeneutics, one which puts him in close dialogue with Origen. Gregory, however, frequently begins his homilies with a brief reflection upon the nature of scripture and the task of the interpreter, and it will be our task to survey these passages and analyse them closely. Rather than bring a rigid framework to each text that he interprets, he instead allows his hermeneutical reflections to be guided by the subject matter of the particular text on which he is preaching. Certain conceptual and terminological similarities do emerge, however, which can help point us to the broad interpretive principles guiding Gregory's exegesis.

Tractatus 2 (Gen 18)

Gregory begins his homily on the Lord's appearance to Abraham at the oaks of Mambré with the following reflection:

⁴² Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 135.

It is my labour and task, beloved brothers, to discover the meaning of what this noble patriarch and admirable prophet prophesied either by word or by deed [*vel sermone vel opere prophetavit*], since he showed many things that were to happen not only by his words, but also by his actions. Reading his deeds [*gesta*] now and bringing together the figural matters with the gospel, let us seize the full and perfect solace of our hope. Abraham, therefore, having a four-fold figure in himself [*quadruplicem in semetipso figuram habens*], showed the great mystery of the divine dispensation through an image [*per imaginem*]. First, he was a figure of the law and the prophets, and secondly, of the people Israel, to whom the law was to be given. Thirdly, he was a figure of our saviour and us, who were to become sons of the same Abraham by faith through Christ, and finally of the unbelieving people.⁴³

In this passage, Gregory refers to Abraham as a patriarch and a prophet, and prophetic significance is attached both to his words and deeds. The significance of this narrative, for Gregory, lies in what it prefigures. Abraham figurally represents (*habens figuram*) four different groups: the law and the prophets; Israel; the church; and unbelievers. Gregory's words can here be misleading, however. The reader may presume that he is suggesting that the narrative of Gen 18 can be read according to four different 'levels' of meaning. But this is not the case.⁴⁴ Different parts of the narrative prefigure different things. For instance, the location where God appears to Abraham – *ad ilicem Mambre iuxta exitus viarum* – recalls for Gregory Christ's parable of the wedding banquet, when the master orders the servants to go *ad exitus viarum* to find guests to replace those who did not attend. Gregory interprets the Matthaean parable as a story of the church's displacement of Israel, thus allowing *Gen* 18:1 to prefigure the adoptive sonship of those who believe in Christ.⁴⁵ The tree (*arbor*), moreover, under which Abraham's guests rested signifies both the cross on which Christ was hanged to redeem humanity's sins

⁴³ *Tract.* 2.1-2 (CCSL 69, p. 13): *Laborandum mihi est et requirendum, dilectissimi fratres, ut inveniam, quid sibi velit, quod patriarcha iste nobilis et admirabilis propheta vel sermone vel opere prophetavit, quia multa non solum verbo, sed actu quae erant futura monstravit, cuius gesta nos modo legentes et res imaginarias evangelio conferentes plenum et perfectum spei nostrae solatium capiamus. Abraham ergo quadruplicem in semetipso figuram habens magnum divinae dispensationis sacramentum per imaginem portendebat. Una enim in eo erat figura legis et prophetarum, altera populi Israelis, quibus erat lex ipsa tradenda, tertia salvatoris et nostra, qui filii fidei eiusdem Abrahae per Christum futuri eramus, quarta populi non credentis.*

⁴⁴ Tovar Paz, *Tractatus*, p. 132, notes that Gregory can discern multiple meanings at the same 'level' of meaning in a single *lectio*: 'Las correspondencias alegóricas consideran un mismo motivo con múltiples significados dentro de un mismo nivel de lectura... un mismo pasaje bíblico puede proyectarse, a la vez, sobre diversos motivos del Antiguo y el Nuevo Testamento, y significar varios referentes a un tiempo dentro de una misma interpretación figurativa'.

⁴⁵ *Tract.* 2.6 (CCSL 69, p. 13): *Quod cum diceret, ostendebat, quia Iudaei, qui per legem et prophetas ad coniunctionem Christi et ecclesiae fuerant provocati, cum indignos se iudicassent non veniendo, id est non credendo in eum, tunc missi sunt apostolos ad exitus viarum, ut ex omnibus gentibus colligerent credentium populos et essent refugium nationum.*

and the refuge under which believers could seek refreshment [*refrigerium*] during persecution.⁴⁶

Throughout the remainder of the sermon, Gregory continues to decode the various elements in *Gen* 18, demonstrating the way in which they prefigure the coming of Christ and the salvation of those who believe in him. Indeed, at the conclusion of the homily, Gregory offers an exhaustive summary of his findings:

His tabernacle, as I said, was a type [*typum*] of Jerusalem, where the Lord first came, who was received by the believers, truly suspended on a wooden cross by the unbelievers, and was slain as the fatted calf. The milk and butter signify that *the law and the prophets prophesied until John* (*Matt* 11:13). The three measures [*mensurae*] which Sara used to make the bread baked in ashes I have said reveal the image [*imaginem*] of the three sons, from whom the entire human race was born, who, believing in the divine Trinity [*divinae trinitati*] – that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – were to be sprinkled together with the waters of baptism through the church, of which Sara was an image [*imago*], and brought together in the one loaf of the body of Christ. For Sara, as I have said, was a type [*typum gerebat*] of the church.⁴⁷

In this homily, Gregory gives short shrift to the coherence of the narrative and its historical context. He is instead interested almost exclusively in discerning the realities of which the elements of the story are types [*typi*], figures [*figurae*], and images [*imagines*], three terms that Gregory uses interchangeably.⁴⁸ There is not, moreover, any clear distinction between various ‘levels’ of meaning in this text. Gregory certainly does not deny the historicity of the event, but nor does he discuss the ‘historical’ level in any depth at all. He gives an entirely figural reading of the story, and each element signifies one or, in certain cases, two different realities, pertaining to the church and Christ.

Tractatus 3 (Gen 21)

⁴⁶ *Tract.* 2.7-9 (CCSL 69, p. 14): *Arbor autem illa crucis imaginem perspicue portabat...quia illic suspensus est dominus, ut peccata nostra, quae nobis ex transgressionis ligno obvenerant, in ligno crucis rursus per eundem hominem affixa puniretur, sicut beatus apostolus Paulus cum de crucis mysterio disputaret ait: In quo adfixum inquit expiavit delictum; aliis vero umbram et refrigerium praestabat, quo credentes ab aestu et ardore persecutionis proteguntur ac refrigerantur, sicut scriptum est: In umbra alarum tuarum sperabo, donec transeat iniquitas.*

⁴⁷ *Tract.* 2.28-9 (CCSL 69, p. 19): *Tabernaculam eius typum Ierusalem fuisse dixi, ubi primum dominus advenit, qui a credentibus exceptus est, ab incredulis vero in crucis ligno suspensus est et quasi vitulus saginatus occisus est. Lac et butyrum <significat>, quia lex et prophetae usque ad Iohannem prophetaverunt. Tres mensurae similiae, unde Sara panes subcinericios fecit, trium dixi filiorum imaginem indicasse, ex quibus omne genus hominem natum est, qui divinae trinitati credentes, id est patri et filio et spiritui sancto, ex aqua baptismatis per ecclesiam, cuius imago Sara erat, conspargendi essent et in uno corporis Christi pane redigendi; Sara enim ut iam dixi ecclesiae typum gerebat.*

⁴⁸ In the space of several lines, Sara is referred to as both a ‘type’ and ‘image’ of the church: *cuius Sara imago erat; Sara ecclesiae typum gerebat.*

The hermeneutical reflection with which Gregory begins his homily on the story of Sara's jealousy at witnessing the playing of Isaac and Ishmael again focuses more on the nature of prophecy than of scripture itself:

If the deeds of all the fathers and prophecies of all the prophets, which the blessed apostle Paul teaches are a type of things to come [*typum futurorum*], with diligent care and solicitous attention we choose to search and consider we say without doubt that the great mystery [*magnum sacramentum*] of our hope and faith has been set down [*dispositum*] from ancient times. For there is nothing unexpected or surprising that has happened in the gospel, which was not earlier shown either by the prefiguring preaching of the fathers [*praefigurata patrum praedicatione monstratum*] or foreshown in work [*opere praeostensum*] or foretold by the prophetic voice [*prophetica voce praedicatum*].⁴⁹

Scripture, here specifically the Old Testament, is a record of past prophecy, which originally was set down [*dispositum*] to disclose the coming of Christ and now serves as confirmation of the truth of the gospel. Notably, Gregory makes no distinction between the *gesta patrum* and the *vaticinia prophetarum*: both exist to point to future realities. It is, moreover, on the authority of Paul, the 'blessed apostle', that Gregory justifies his typological readings of the Old Testament narratives.

Gregory's aim in the homily is to resolve the question why Sara first desired that Abraham 'sleep with Hagar' and father a child with her, but later demanded that he expel the slave and her son Ishmael from the house.⁵⁰ Gregory immediately disengages the narrative from its historical context by asserting that Sara did not order the expulsion of Hagar 'out of a spirit of jealousy [*zelotypiae spiritu*]' but rather 'by the spirit of prophecy [*spiritu prophetiae*].'⁵¹ The story can only make sense if it is read typologically as a prophecy of future things; Gregory shows no interest in reading the text according to its 'historical' sense. He gives an interpretation along the lines of the Pauline allegory, although he emphasizes more clearly and decisively the election of the

⁴⁹ *Tract. 3.1-2* (CCSL 69, p. 20): *Si omnium patrum gesta prophetarumque vaticinia, quae typum futurorum esse beatus Paulus apostolus docet, diligenti cura et sollicita animadversione aspicere et considerare velimus, procul dubio magnum sacramentum spei ac salutis nostrae a saeculis antiquis dispositum esse dicimus. Nihil enim repentinum aut inopinatum in evangelio gestum est, quod non fuerit prius aut praefigurata patrum praedicatione monstratum aut opere praeostensum aut prophetica voce praedicatum.*

⁵⁰ *Tract. 2.3* (CCSL 69, p. 20): *Que igitur, dilectissimi fratres, intuendum est nobis et requirendum, ut inveniamus, quae causa quaeve ratio extiterit, ut primum vellet maritum suum cum ancilla dormire et eundem filium, quem de ancilla suscepserat, velut suum proprium edocaret et hunc eundem edocatum postea cum matre sua de domo iuberet expelli.*

⁵¹ *Tract. 2.4* (CCSL 69, p. 20).

church and the rejection of the synagogue: ‘Sara, free and noble, was a type of the church [*typum habebat ecclesiae*], which is the body of Christ, according to the apostle’s definition, just as Sara is the flesh of Abraham...Hagar the slave of Sara, therefore, clearly bore a type of the synagogue [*typum synagogae perspicue portabat*], who bearing a son – that is, the people in the servitude of their sins – could not remain in the house of her master, that is the church’.⁵² In broad strokes, then, Sara is a figure of the church and Hagar is a figure of the synagogue, and it is only in light of this typology that the narrative can have any coherence or sense.

Other specific interpretive questions arising from the passage, which Tovar Paz has termed ‘secondary *quaestiones*’, are interpreted within the context of this primary typology. Sara’s laughing at Abraham when he promises her a child, for example, has ‘a double meaning [*duplicem habet significantiam*]’. Because Isaac is a figure of the Christian people [*eo quod populus Christianorum in cuius figura Isahac nasci habebat*], laughing signifies ‘what will be suffered at the hands of unbelievers in the present age, or the coming joy and laughter that will follow’.⁵³ Likewise, the water in the well that was insufficient for Hagar and Ishmael when they were wandering in the desert has two different potential meanings. Gregory first argues that the water represents the Jewish purification rites, which are not able ‘to offer any refreshment or to satisfy man’.⁵⁴ It can, however, also represent ‘the letter of the law...which often suffers defect’.⁵⁵ On both interpretations, the water fits into the broader typology of the synagogue’s inadequacy and its supersession by the church. A final example comes from the closing of the homily, when Gregory is addressing how the angel sent to Hagar could also be

⁵² *Tract. 3.5* (CCSL 69, pp. 20-1): *Sarra enim libera et nobilis typum habebat ecclesiae, quam ecclesiam corpus Xpristi esse apostolus definivit, sicuti et Sarra Abrahae caro erat...Agar ergo ancilla Sarrae typum synagogae perspicue portabat, quae filium, id est populum in servitute peccatorum suorum generans in domo dominae suae, id est ecclesiae manere non poterat.*

⁵³ *Tract. 3.11* (CCSL 69, p. 22): *Qui risus duplicem habet significantiam, eo quod populus Christianorum in cuius figura Isahac nasci habebat risum in hoc saeculo ab incredulis esset passurus vel quod in futurum risum et gaudium consecuturus esset.*

⁵⁴ *Tract. 3.19* (CCSL 69, p. 24): *aqua purificationis non modo nullum eis refrigerium praestare nec satiare hominem posuit.*

⁵⁵ *Tract. 3.20* (CCSL 69, p.24): *legis littera est...quia littera frequenter defectum patitur.*

called God.⁵⁶ Gregory concludes, ‘He says that this angel is true God [*verum deum*], in order that he might show that the son is God. And he is called angel on account of obedience to the Father’s will [*paternae voluntatis*] and God according to the nature of the Father [*secundum naturam patris*], because he is truly God, for he is son of God, true God from true God, only-begotten from unbegotten, not able to be other than God’.⁵⁷ This division of the Son from the Father is meant to refute the ‘Sabellians’, whereas the identification of the angel as God serves to refute the ‘Arians’. Although this exegetical move does appear to deviate from the original typology, Gregory here takes the opportunity to differentiate the true church from the heretics, as opposed to the Jews. The content thus remains Christological and ecclesiological, if no longer eschatological.

This homily discloses several notable attitudes towards the interpretive task. First, the notion of scripture as a record of prophecy – specifically, prophecy concerning Christ and the founding of the church – predominates. Secondly, the coherence of scripture lies at the figural level, not in the historical, literal character of the narrative itself. Hence, the exegete’s task lies primarily in ascertaining the reality of which the elements of the narrative are types. *Typus*, *figura*, and *imago* are the most commonly used terms to denote this. Thirdly, particular elements of the narratives can signify more than one thing. The laughing of Sara had a *duplicem significantiam*, just as the water from the well could be a type either of Jewish purification rituals or the letter of scripture. But this is not to say that Gregory understands there to be distinctly different ‘senses’ of scripture, as Origen posits and early medieval theologians develop along more formal lines. Both interpretations of the *aqua de utre*, for example, demonstrate the church’s supersession of the synagogue, although couched in different terms.

⁵⁶ The problem as framed by Gregory in *Tract.* 3.32 has a direct parallel in Novatian’s *De Trinitate* 18, which is likely the underlying source. In the passage, Novatian is attempting to demonstrate that Christ is rightly called ‘God’, and he uses both the appearance of the three men to Abraham at the oaks of Mambre and the angel to Hagar in the desert as proofs. Since the messenger is both ‘Angel’ and ‘God’, he cannot be the Father. He can only be the Son who alone can rightly be called both ‘God’, because he is ‘of God’, and ‘Angel’, because as the Word he is the ‘announcer of the Father’s will’. But the distinctly pro-Nicene vocabulary of the *Tractatus* – *Deus secundum naturam Patris*; *Deus verus de deo vero* – are, unsurprisingly, not found in Novatian.

⁵⁷ *Tract.* 3.34 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *Ac proinde et angelus propter obedientiam paternae voluntatis dicitur et deus secundum naturam patris, quia vere deus est, nuncupatur; filius etenim dei, deus verus de deo vero, unigenitus ab ingenito non potest alius esse quam deus.*

Tractatus 4 (Gen 17)

It is in the fourth *Tractatus* that we see very clearly and succinctly Gregory's attitude to the Old Testament. The *lectio* on which he is preaching is God's command to Abraham that all men must be circumcised. The passage poses obvious interpretive difficulty, for it proscribes in quite clear terms a practice that Christians have long abandoned:

Since we frequently struggle against the Jews concerning circumcision and the present reading alerts us to preach on it, what the reason was for such a requirement, the reason why circumcision was so strongly required of the Israelite people ought to be sought.⁵⁸

Rather than begin with an analysis of the passage, Gregory offers a definition of the word 'circumcision': 'circumcision is a cutting around with iron in which something is amputated'.⁵⁹ He asserts that the Jews, too, would accept this definition, and rhetorically he asks them, 'What glory is there in undertaking a cutting off of flesh in a perfect body and mutilating the intact figure of the newborn with an incision of iron?'⁶⁰ Gregory continues to press the argument regarding the absurdity of the command by noting that neither Adam, 'the father of the human race [*pater generis humani*]', nor Seth, 'begotten by him [*ipsius genitus*]', nor Enoch, 'who was taken away intact [*translatus integer*]', nor even Noah, 'saved from the ruin of the world [*excidio mundi...servatus est*]' were circumcised.⁶¹ He also advances what he thinks is a logical inconsistency about the command to circumcise on the eighth day: for infants born on the Sabbath, 'it is necessary that they be circumcised on the following Sabbath, that is the eighth day'.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Tract.* 4.1 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *Quia saepe nobis adversum Iudaeos de circumcissione certamen est et praesens lectio admonuit, ut exinde sermonem facere deberemus, proinde requirenda est ratio, cur circumcissione tanto opere mandata sit populo Israheli.*

⁵⁹ *Tract.* 4.2 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *circumcisionem esse circumductum ferro vulnus quo aliquid amputatur.* Compare with Zeno, *Tract.* 13.1: *Circumcisio est, fratres, in damnum rotundi vulneris ferro circulata cicatrix.* The definition of circumcision as a 'wounding with iron' is unique to Gregory and Zeno. Since they were both contemporaries and were separated from one another by some distance, it is likely that this definition derives from a common source.

⁶⁰ *Tract.* 4.2 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *Quae gloria est iacturum carnis in perfecto corpore suscepisse et integram nativitatis figuram ferro vulnerante mutilasse?*

⁶¹ *Tract.* 4.4 (CCSL 69, p. 28). Compare with Tertullian, *Adv. Iud.* 2.11-14, who lists Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Melchisedek as righteous patriarchs who were uncircumcised and Zeno, *Tract.* 13.3, who lists Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Melchisedek. Neither, however, mentions Seth, whom Gregory includes, and both list Melchizedek, whom Gregory omits.

⁶² *Tract.* 4.7-8 (CCSL 69, p. 29): *Quem sabbato rursus, id est octava die circumcidi necesse est. Et ita fiet, ut aut sabbatum circumcisionem aut circumcisio diem sabbati violet, dum et ferrum sabbatis contra licitum tenetur et opus agitur et vulnus imprimiture, aut si sabbatum evitatur, circumcisionis lex*

One would then have to choose between violating the Sabbath or the command to circumcise on the eighth day.

Having amassed his mountain of evidence against the rationality of the command that all infants be circumcised on the eighth day, Gregory finally delivers his explanation for how the passage ought to be read:

Beloved brothers, there is a three-fold reason [*ratio*] for this matter [*rei*], that is for guilt [*culpae*], race [*generis*], and figure [*figurae*] – guilt in sadness [*dolore*], race in sign [*signo*], figure in mystery [*sacramento*]...Because, therefore, it pertains to figure, circumcision is not itself truth, but a prefiguring of the truth [*praedictio veritatis*], a sign of future salvation [*signum futurae salutis*], not the perfection of reason [*non perfectio rationis*]...thus also there is an image of truth in the Old Testament [*in Veteri Testamento imago veritatis*], but truth itself [*ipsa veritas*] is not discerned'.⁶³

For this observation, Gregory relies not only on the supposed incoherence of the divine mandate, but also on the words of the Apostle Paul, who writes concerning the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, 'All these things happened to them in figure [*in figuram*]; for they were written for the purpose of our correction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come'.⁶⁴ It is, rather, the circumcision of the heart that is signified by the physical act: 'That true and lawful circumcision is to be had nowhere but in the heart'.⁶⁵ The physical act of circumcision points to the truth, but is in itself empty if what it signifies is not discerned. Likewise, the Old Testament is only true insofar as it prefigures the truth. As Pasqual Tórró has noted, this places the Old Testament on a lower ontological plane from the New, which directly reveals the truth: one is the image, the other the reality.⁶⁶

Gregory is willing to grant the historical veracity of God's command to Abraham, as he is that of the entire Old Testament. The coherence and truth of Scripture

profanatur, dum octava die non exercetur, et incircumcisi anima perimitur, nisi secundum legem octava die circumcidatur. Compare with Zeno, *Tract.* 13.2: *Si circumcidit, sabbatum corrumpit, si non circumcidit, cum innocentis animae interitu praestitutae circumcisionis jura vacuavit, quia solus octavus dies a Deo circumcisionis privilegium, non septimus, non nonus accepit, ac per hoc necesse est, ut utrumque inane sit, si infirmari potest alterum de duobus.*

⁶³ *Tract.* 4.12-13 (CCSL 69, pp. 29-30).

⁶⁴ *Tract.* 4.14 (CCSL 69, p. 30): *Omnia in figuram contingebant illis; scripta sunt autem ad correptionem nostram, in quos fines saeculorum devenerunt.*

⁶⁵ *Tract.* 4.17 (CCSL 69, p. 31): *Circumcisio illa vera atque legitima nusquam alibi nisi in corde habenda est.*

⁶⁶ *Commentario al Commentar*, p. 18-19.

cannot, however, be discerned at the historical level. This was the case with the story of the expulsion of Hagar. It is the record of an event that happened in time, but the event makes no sense unless it is considered as a type or image of the coming of Christ, the election of the Gentiles, and the displacement of the synagogue. Likewise, God's command to circumcise all males on the eighth day, thereby 'mutilating' the body, cannot be coherently explained as something good, which is meant to glorify both God and his chosen people. For it to be good and glorifying, it must be seen as a type or figure of something that is good and glorifying – in this case, the circumcision of the heart. Gregory, moreover, concretely links this spiritual circumcision to the advent of Christ and his *lex nova*: 'And, therefore, he gave the new circumcision, when he set in place the new law. For when the whole man is circumcised [*circumcidatur*] in baptism, then he is reborn'.⁶⁷ The typological interpretation of this passage does not, however, focus on an interior disposition or state, as we may well expect when he speaks of the 'circumcision of the heart'. Rather, physical circumcision is a prophetic sign that heralds the new baptism in Christ, which alone is sufficient to effect the renewal of the entire person [*totus homo*]. As so often is the case, Gregory's interpretation is Christological and ecclesiological.

This homily may also give us further evidence of Gregory's knowledge and use of Victorinus' *Commentary on Genesis*. Gregory advances a very similar argument against circumcision as does Zeno of Verona, in his homily *De circumcissione*, which we briefly mentioned above. Both assert that if an infant must be circumcised on the eighth day [*octava die*], then in many cases this would require a violation of the Sabbath. Such a contradiction points to the futility of both laws. There is some slight biblical precedent for this line of argumentation. In *John* 7:21-3, Jesus is recorded as saying, 'Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man's whole body on the sabbath?' In the gospel text, however, no contradiction is

⁶⁷ *Tract.* 4.28 (CCSL 69, p. 33): *Ac proinde et novam circumcissionem dedit, dum novam legem instituit. Nam cum in baptisate totus homo circumcidatur dum renascitur.*

presented between the two laws. The allowance for circumcision on the Sabbath is an exception to the Sabbath law, on which basis Jesus proposes the possibility of other exceptions. If this passage presented an argument that could easily be transposed into polemic against circumcision, we would expect it to be much more prevalent. We may thus presume that Gregory and Zeno, who were contemporaries from rather distant sees, were reliant upon an earlier source, which may well be Victorinus' *Genesis* commentary. Victorinus does, indeed, make a related argument in the *De Fabrica Mundi*, except it is there the inverse – directed against the observance of the Sabbath rather than circumcision. Victorinus says that 'Christ, the *Lord of Sabbath*, abolished in his body that Sabbath, which he said through the prophets *my soul hates*. Earlier, however, he had commanded Moses that circumcision should not pass by the eighth day, which often falls on the Sabbath, as we read written in the Gospel'.⁶⁸ The premise of the argument, however, is nearly identical: the command to circumcise on the Sabbath cannot be reconciled with proper Sabbath observation, thus negating the coherence of both laws. Although the *De Fabrica Mundi* could possibly be the source for Gregory and Zeno, its polemic is directed more against the observance of the Sabbath than circumcision. We may well imagine Victorinus taking a similar line of argumentation against circumcision in his exegesis of *Gen 17* in the *Commentary on Genesis*, which could quite plausibly serve as the source for Gregory and Zeno.

Tractatus 5 (Gen 39)

The story of the seduction of Joseph by Potiphar's wife evokes one of Gregory's longest reflections on the nature of scripture:

Although, beloved brothers, there is no doubt that in nearly all the books of the Old Testament [*in omnibus fere libris Veteris Testamenti*] there is a threefold signification [*triplicem significantiam*] – that is, of prophecy, history, and figure [*prophetiae, istoriae et figurae*] – nevertheless we must work to be able to mark out and discuss each such matter in its own kind and place. For prophecy lies in the foreknowledge of future things [*in praescientia futurorum*], history in the reporting of events [*in relatione gestorum*], and figure in the likeness of things [*in similitudinem rerum*]. This does not include those things that seem to pertain either to our edification or consolation or exhortation or chastisement. This reading, therefore, which has now been read, shows clear

⁶⁸ *Fabr. 5* (SC 423, p. 142): *quod ipse dominus sabbati Christus per prophetas suos odisse animam suam dicit, quod sabbatum corpore suo resolvit. Prius autem, cum ipse Moysi praeciperet ne circumcisio diem octavam praeteriret, quae die sabbato plerumque incurrit, sicut in evangelio scriptum legimus.*

history, which praises the chastity of the holy youth and condemns the unchastity of the detestable woman. But it also possesses an image of prophecy [*prophetiae imaginem gerit*], since, just as there cannot be a shadow without a body or a body without a shadow, there can neither be truth without figure nor figure without truth.⁶⁹

The primary error that scholars have made when reading this passage is to presume that the phrase *triplicem significantiam* refers to three distinct ‘senses’ of the scriptural text. But this entails an improper separation of *prophetia* and *figura*, which Gregory does not make. Indeed, Gregory is not proposing a distinction between reading the text *secundum prophetiam* and *secundum figuram*. Prophecy, which is the ‘foreknowledge of future things’, is often figurally concealed in the text in the ‘likeness of things’. This is precisely what Gregory means when he says that the narrative of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife ‘possesses an image of prophecy [*prophetiae imaginem*]...since there can be neither truth without figure nor figure without truth [*nec veritas sine figura nec figura sine veritate*]’. *Imago* and *figura* are here, as elsewhere in Gregory’s corpus, used synonymously. And, indeed, it must be emphasized that Gregory is here limiting his observations to the Old Testament, not scripture as a whole, which generally goes unnoticed.

There are thus only two levels of meaning that Gregory discerns in the scriptural text: the historical and the figural. Although in the other homilies we have examined thus far Gregory has given little attention to the historical context, making great effort to demonstrate the incoherence of the passage if taken only on its own terms, he here sees value in the literal sense of the text. The actual, historical event, as recorded in scripture, offers a valuable moral lesson concerning chastity: ‘For every evil is easier to conquer than pleasure [*voluptas*], because whatever is evil is dreadful, but pleasure is seductive...The one who conquers desire [*cupiditatem*] removes all fear, since fear

⁶⁹ *Tract. 5.1* (CCSL 69, p. 34): *Quamquam dubium non sit, dilectissimi fratres, in omnibus fere libris Veteris Testamenti triplicem esse significantiam, id est prophetiae, istoriae et figurae, tamen laborandum nobis est, ut unam quamque rem in suo genere et statu disserere et assignare possimus. Nam prophetia est in praescientia futurorum, istoria in relatione gestorum, figura in similitudinem rerum, exceptis illis, quae ad aedificationem aut consolationem aut exhortationem aut ad increpationem pertinere videntur. Haec ergo lectio, quae nunc recitata est, manifestam quidem istoriam indicat, quae sancti iuvenis pudiciam laudat et detestandae mulieris in pudiciam denotat et condemnat. Sed nihilominus et prophetiae imaginem gerit, quia, sicut nec umbra sine corpore nec corpus sine umbra esse potest, sic nec veritas sine figura nec figura sine veritate constabit.*

comes from passion. The one who conquers desire triumphs over sin. The one who conquers desire proves himself a true disciple of Christ'.⁷⁰ This moral lesson makes the historical interpretation of the text a worthy subject of study and contemplation: 'For this very reason, beloved brothers, we ought always to set this and other like examples before the eyes of our mind'.⁷¹

Gregory's summary of the Genesis narrative and his observations on the good of chastity are not, however, his own. Nearly the entirety of his remarks on the historical narrative of the text and his exhortation to moral virtue are taken, almost verbatim, from the Pseudo-Cyprianic treatise *De bono pudicitiae*.⁷² This material represents nearly one-third of the entire homily. The *De bono pudicitiae* is a brief text written in praise of and exhortation to chastity and virginity, and the author takes the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife as his first and primary *exemplum*.⁷³ Unlike the fifth *Tractatus*, there is no deeper typology discerned in the story, however. Gregory adds this element to his source with precision.⁷⁴ His instruction to his hearers that they meditate upon the text day and night is likewise his own contribution. We can thus glean from this *tractatus* a clear idea of the extent to which Gregory interacted with and employed other Latin sources in his own preaching. He had no compunction about borrowing lengthy sections of text, not simply ideas, which he must have made a point of memorizing prior to the delivery of his homily, given the closeness of verbal agreement. But he also interwove his own words seamlessly into the source material, ensuring it remained connected with the broader goal of his own preaching – in this instance, the typological revelation of Christ in Joseph.

⁷⁰ *Tract.* 5.11 (CCSL 69, p. 37): *Omne enim malum facilius vincitur quam voluptas, quia illud quidquid est malum horrendum est, hoc vero blandum...Proinde qui cupiditatem vicit, metum omnem tulit, quia metus ex cupiditate descendit; qui cupiditatem vicit, de peccato triumphum egit; qui cupiditatem vicit, verum se Xpristi discipulum comprobavit.*

⁷¹ *Tract.* 5.10 (CCSL 69, p. 36): *Quamobrem, dilectissimi fratres, haec nobis et his similia debemus semper ante mentis oculos exempla proponere.*

⁷² Compare *Tract.* 5.3-13 (CCSL 69, pp. 35-7) with *Pudic.* 8, 10-11 (PL 4:823D-825C).

⁷³ *Pudic.* 8 (PL 4:823D). Zeno of Verona, *Tract.* 4.5, also takes Joseph as the first of two *exempla* of *pudicitia*, along with Susanna. Aside from the opening epithet *Joseph Hebraeus adolescens*, there is very little verbal agreement with either the *De bono pudicitiae* or Gregory's fifth *tractatus*.

⁷⁴ *Pudic.* 8 (PL 4:823D): *Adolescens Hebraeus, generosus de patre, generosior de innocentia; Tract.* 5.3 (CCSL 69, p. 35): *Unde est Ioseph iste adolescens et Hebraeus typum Christi habens, generosus de patre, generosior de innocentia.*

Despite this exceptionally lengthy analysis of the narrative itself, Gregory spends the majority of the homily discerning the typology of the text. He begins, however, by offering a comparison of Christ and Joseph, ‘who exhibited a type of Christ in his actions’, drawn from the broader story of Joseph’s life.⁷⁵ His many-coloured tunic discloses [*indicat*] the many pagan nations who come to believe in Christ;⁷⁶ Joseph was separated [*distractus est*] from his brothers, as Christ was from the Jews, his brothers *secundum carnem*;⁷⁷ his tunic was sprinkled with blood to produce the illusion of death, as Christ’s flesh, ‘which is called a tunic [*quae tunica apellatur*]’, was bathed in blood on the cross that he might seem dead;⁷⁸ and he is called beautiful, as David says of Christ in the Psalms.⁷⁹

Having completed his comparison of Joseph and Christ, Gregory says, ‘But now let us see to the other matter, namely that which seems to bear the type of prophecy’.⁸⁰ This sentence signals a turn from a general overview of the life of Joseph, which is the basis for his elaboration of the Joseph-Christ typology, to a figural reading of the text of the *lectio*. The phrase *typum prophetiae*, as noted above, connotes the figural concealment of the prophetic witness in the narrative of the Old Testament. The subject of the prophecy is the rejection of the synagogue on account of its infidelity, the election of the church, and the temporary reign of the Antichrist.

Potiphar’s wife, the *mulier*, prefigures the synagogue: ‘That woman was a figure of the synagogue, which often, as it was written, committed adultery with alien gods (*Deut 31:16*)’.⁸¹ For Gregory, it is specifically in their adherence to the ‘Pharasaic tradition [*Pharisaica traditio*]’ that the Jews have ‘neglected the divine law, which they possessed as a spouse’.⁸² He emphasizes Christ’s refusal to participate in this idolatry, leading to his ironic condemnation as a *transgressor legis*, which parallels Joseph’s

⁷⁵ *Tract. 5.14* (CCSL 69, p. 37): *Ioseph typum Christi in suis actibus praetulisse.*

⁷⁶ *Tract. 5.14-15.*

⁷⁷ *Tract. 5.18.*

⁷⁸ *Tract. 5.18.*

⁷⁹ *Tract. 5.18.* Cf. Ps 44:3: *Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum, diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis.*

⁸⁰ *Tract. 5.19* (CCSL 69, p. 39): *sed iam nunc videamus ad cetera, quae typum prophetiae gerere videntur.*

⁸¹ *Tract. 5.19* (CCSL 69, p.39): *Mulier itaque figura erat synagogae, quae saepe, sicut scriptum est, moechata est post deos alienos.*

⁸² *Tract. 5.20* (CCSL 69, p. 39): *omissa lege divina, quam velut maritum habebat, sicut tractat apostolus, Pharisaica traditione tunc temporis uteretur, de qua traditione longum est hoc in loco disserere.*

unjust imprisonment for resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife. This allows Gregory to return to the typology of the 'tunic' as Christ's body, 'which was held in the tomb under the protection of the adulterous synagogue'.⁸³ Moreover, the seven years of abundance about which Pharaoh dreamed are the 'gifts of the seven spiritual charisms, which were promised to the church, which is the flesh of Christ, by the prophet Isaiah – that is, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of council, the spirit of virtue, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of piety, and the spirit of the fear of God'.⁸⁴ The seven years of famine, by contrast, 'signified the coming famine of the divine word and of justice in the time of the Antichrist'.⁸⁵ In the narrative of Joseph's seduction by Potiphar's wife, his imprisonment and his ultimate redemption through the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams contains in germ a history of salvation: the unfaithful synagogue is rejected because of its idolatry, the church is elected in its place with the gift of the seven charisms of the spirit, the Antichrist will then cause the true worship of the church temporarily to cease, but justice will ultimately be restored by Christ in the coming *regnum dei*.

A close analysis of the homily demonstrates that Gregory discerns only two different layers of meaning in the text of the *lectio*: the historical and the typological. In this particular instance, the historical reading of the text contains within it the hortatory or edificatory element, through its praise of chastity. Prophecies pertaining to the rejection of the synagogue and the election of the church are concealed typologically in the text. *Prophetia* is the content, and *figura* is the form. We shall see in several subsequent homilies different permutations of these four elements: prophecy can be discerned in the historical sense of the text, and figures can conceal moral lessons. But such instances are rare, and the Christological and ecclesiological reading that Gregory

⁸³ *Tract.* 5.22 (CCSL 69, p. 39): *licet tunica corporis eius in sepultura teneretur a synagogae adulterae custodia.*

⁸⁴ *Tract.* 5.26 (CCSL 69, p. 40): *septem sunt carismatum spiritualium dona, quae per Esaiam vatem inclitum ecclesiae, quae Christi caro est, promittuntur, id est spiritus sapientiae, spiritus intelligentiae, spiritus consilii, spiritus virtutis, spiritus agnitionis, spiritus pietatis, spiritus timoris dei.*

⁸⁵ *Tract.* 5.33 (CCSL 69, p. 42): *Fames autem illa, quae fuit super omnem terram, diximus iam quod famem significabat divini verbi et iustitiae futuram temporibus Antichristi.*

gives of the present *lectio* is representative of his general method of interpreting the Old Testament.

Tractatus 9 (Exod 12)

In his homily on Moses' instructions concerning the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, Gregory strongly emphasizes the prophetic character of the Old Testament, and its intimate connection with the New:

The mystery of the pasch [*paschae sacramentum*], beloved brothers, which now is celebrated in the passion of the Lord's body, was neither sudden nor unforeseen [*non derepente nec improvisum*]. For whatever is new and distinguished and magnificent was revealed before the time through the old law in likeness [*in similitudine*]... Whence if you wish to consider the passion of our Lord through the image of an earlier demonstrated likeness [*per imaginem retro olim demonstratae similitudinis*], then you will find that this lamb, who was sacrificed in the pasch, was a figure of Christ, who struck Egypt and freed Israel.⁸⁶

This is Gregory's most forceful and eloquent defense of his conception of the Old Testament as prophecy of the New. A figural reading of the Old Testament demonstrates that Christ's passion was not something hastily arranged and thus an unforeseen deviation from the old law, but rather something foreordained by God and revealed figurally long before its fruition. It serves as a means of affirming the veracity of the claims made in the New Testament. But the Old Testament can also illuminate the truth of the gospel in a way not possible from a reading only of the New, which he indicates by offering the figure of the paschal lamb as another means of 'consider[ing] the passion of our Lord'. Gregory makes a very similar point in his homily on the spying of the land of Canaan: 'But since the old things agree with the new not in time [*tempore*], but in reason [*ratione*], when we compare with that same reason the new things with the old and the old with the new, we show the single cause and reason [*unam causam et rationem*] of the two testaments through the one spirit of God. For God is one and his Word, that is the son of God, and the Spirit, *who works all things in all things*,

⁸⁶ *Tract. 9.1-2* (CCSL 69, p. 70): *Paschae itaque sacramentum, dilectissimi fratres, quod nunc in dominici corporis pa[ssio]ne celebratur, non derepente nec improvisam fuit. Quodcumque enim novum atque praeclarum atque magnificum est, hoc ante tempus per legem priscam in similitudine monstrabatur... Unde si domini nostri passionem per imaginem retro olim demonstratae similitudinis velitis attendere, tunc invenietis agnum hunc, qui immolabatur in pasca, Christi fuisse figuram, qui percussit Aegyptum et liberavit Israhel.*

are one, who spoke typologically [*typice*] in the law and plainly [*manifeste*] in the apostles'.⁸⁷

Tractatus 10 (Lev 22)

One feature of the scriptural text that Gregory emphasizes in his homily on *Leviticus 22*, which receives little emphasis elsewhere, is the obscurity of its meaning(s):

But now also this reading, which has been recited, has so many questions, such confusing obscurities, that with difficulty the sharpness of mind is able to lay open the secrets [*secreta*] of its contents...for thus each one has been cloaked with the coverings of allegory [*allegoriae integumentis*], obscured by the cloud of enigmas [*aenigmatum nubilo*], with the result that they are scarcely able to be understood or explained...I dare through the Lord to preach a sermon on this reading, in order that what seems to be closed up in a rather secret approach might be able to be perceived in the light of understanding and brought out openly.

It should be noted that Gregory is not here speaking of the entire Old Testament generally, but only of the particular passage in question. In certain homilies, he remarks on the clarity and transparency of the passage in question, cautioning us against taking these remarks as representative of his entire view of scripture.⁸⁸ But it remains clear that certain texts are opaque, obscure, and interpreted with the greatest of difficulty. This is certainly the case with *Lev 22*, which describes in detail the sacrifice that is acceptable to God. It is also notable that Gregory here uses the term *allegoria*, which he only infrequently employs elsewhere, preferring instead *typus*, *figura*, *imago*, and *similitudo*. Its use with the verb *obvolvo*, here having the sense of 'to cloak or to disguise', and its pairing with *aenigma*, suggests its association with the particularly hidden and obscure elements of scripture.

The 'prophetic' element, which was so prominent in the preceding homilies, recedes into the background, giving way to a focus on exhortation and chastisement. The *hostia*, which is the subject of the *lectio*, does not represent Christ in any way, but rather the individual Christian. The lens through which Gregory interprets the passage,

⁸⁷ *Tract.* 11.3-4 (CCSL 69, p. 84): *Sed quia vetera cum novis non tempore, sed ratione concordant, proinde nos eadem ratione veteribus nova et novis vetera conferentes duorum testamentorum unam causam et rationem per unum dei spiritum ostendimus. Unus est enim deus et sermo ipsius, id est dei filius, et unus spiritus sanctus, qui operatur omnia in omnibus, qui et in lege typice et in apostolis locutus est manifeste.*

⁸⁸ See, e.g., *Tract.* 17.2.

which we might call the primary intertext, is *Rom* 12:1: ‘Present your body as a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, your rational service’.⁸⁹ He asserts that ‘God now does not seek those sacrifices, such as were then offered blood-spattered from the bringing of beasts, but rather he desires our mind and conversation and a heart humbled in the fear of God’.⁹⁰ There are a number of different kinds of sacrifices that Gregory identifies. There is the ‘sacrifice, which is offered in the devotion of the martyrs [*sacrificium, quod in martyrii devotione immolatur*]’; the ‘sacrifice of virginity [*sacrificum virginitatis*]’; the ‘sacrifice of mercy [*sacrificium elemosinae*]’; the ‘sacrifice of continence [*sacrificium continentiae*]’; and the ‘sacrifice of the fear of God [*sacrificium timoris dei*]’.⁹¹ The homily serves as an extended exhortation to martyrdom, ascetic renunciation, and virtuous living.⁹²

Whereas in the fifth *Tractatus* the hortatory dimension of scripture was discerned at the literal level, it here requires a ‘spiritual’ reading in order to be perceived: ‘But since the imaging law [*lex imaginaria*], which was to be taken spiritually, he first commands to be observed carnally for a time’, in order that spiritual things might be shown in place of carnal things, heavenly in place of earthly, invisible in place of visible, we ought thus to explain again the characteristics [*species*] of the animals I have named’.⁹³ Each prohibition offered in *Lev* 22:22-25 corresponds to a particular vice, sin, or weakness that must be eschewed by the true Christian. For example, the ‘amputated tongue [*linguam amputatam*]’ refers to the one ‘who does not confess or preach his God, who does not meditate on the divine law’.⁹⁴ Likewise, the ‘amputated ear’ signifies the

⁸⁹ *Tract.* 10.9 (CCSL 69, pp. 77-8): *Exhibete corpora vestra hostiam vivam placentem deo, rationabile mysterium vestrum*. The *mysterium* should almost certainly be emended to *ministerium* (λατρεῖον).

⁹⁰ *Tract.* 10.7 (CCSL 69, p. 77): *Sed nunc non eas hostias deus quaerit, quales tunc ex illationibus pecudum cruentae praebebantur, sed mentem et conversationem nostram et cor circa dei timorem humiliatum desiderat*.

⁹¹ *Tract.* 10.8 (CCSL 69, p. 77).

⁹² So pointed is the exhortation to martyrdom that P. Battifol was convinced that the homily dated to a time of persecution, likely that of Diocletian. See ‘Les Tractatus’, pp. 84-90.

⁹³ *Tract.* 10.14 (CCSL 69, p. 79): *Sed quia lex imaginaria, quae spiritaliter gerenda erant, prius pro tempore carnaliter observari praecipit, ut pro carnalibus spiritalia, pro terrenis caelestia, pro visibilibus invisibilia monstrarentur, proinde pecorum species quas nominavi retractare debemus*.

⁹⁴ *Tract.* 10.18 (CCSL 69, p. 79): *Amputatam linguam habet is, qui deum suum non confitetur et praedicat, qui divinam legem non meditatur*.

man ‘who has ears to hear the word of God, but does not do what he is commanded’.⁹⁵ The *agrestis scabies*, an itchy rash, moreover, ‘denotes the sins of the gentiles, that is idolatry, incest, adultery, murder’, since Christ refers to the world [*saeculum*] as a field [*ager*] in his parables,⁹⁶ whereas the *impetigo*, a scabby eruption, represents the ‘collection of heretics, which often immerses itself in the body of the church’.⁹⁷ The *lectio* describes, in negative terms, the life that is pleasing to God.

Gregory’s vocabulary is considerably different in this homily, perhaps owing to its paraenetic function. Although he does not offer a ‘literal’ interpretation of the passage, he does not use terms such as *typus*, *figura*, *imago*, and *similitudo*, which are so prevalent in the other homilies. The term *allegoria* appears only once, when Gregory is reflecting upon the obscurity of the passage. He thinks of an allegory as something that covers or obscures meaning: *allegoriae integumentis obvoluta sunt*. In the homily, Gregory links the ‘literal’ reality and ‘spiritual’ meaning simply using the verb *esse*.⁹⁸ There is a straightforward equation between the two. I argue that this is the case because Gregory thinks that the only referent of the passage is the Christian. The original reference to beasts is but a crude, yet entirely meaningless, covering that masks the true subject of the sacrifice: ‘The holy law speaks about people, not beasts’.⁹⁹ For Gregory, if *A* is to be a ‘type’ or ‘figure’ of *B*, then *A* must have its existence independent of *B*. Since, in his opinion, the *pecus* is a periphrasis for *homo*, it has no historical integrity of its own, and thus the former cannot be a ‘type’ or ‘figure’ of the latter. Indeed, we may cautiously suggest that *allegoria* is here a quasi-technical term, which denotes a reality concealed *in verbis* and not *in rebus*.

⁹⁵ *Tract.* 10.28 (CCSL p. 82): *Quid putatis, fratres, hostiam habentem aurem amputatam intelligi oportere nisi eum hominem, qui habet quidem aures ad audiendum verbum dei, sed non facit quod iubetur?*

⁹⁶ *Tract.* 10.23 (CCSL 69, p. 81): *proinde cum scabiem agrestem nominat, gentilium peccata denotat, id est idolatriam, incestum, adulterium, homicidium...*

⁹⁷ *Tract.* 10.25 (CCSL 69, p. 81): *Impetigo autem hereticorum collectio est, quae frequenter se in ecclesiae corpus immergit.*

⁹⁸ See, e.g., *Tract.* 10.16: *Abstractus ille est, qui, quamvis crediderit Christo et per sacramentum baptismatis dominico adhaeserit corpori*; *Tract.* 10.20: *Hi ergo vermes immundi sunt spiritus*; *Tract.* 10.25: *Impetigo autem hereticorum collectio est.*

⁹⁹ *Tract.* 10.30: *Sed in comparatione harum rerum, quia non de pecoribus, sed de hominibus lex sacra loquebatur.*

Tractatus 16 (Isa 1)

The theme of the obscurity of scripture and the hiddenness of its meaning recurs prominently in Gregory's homily on the opening verses of Isaiah, and leads to an extensive reflection on the reason for this concealment. He begins with language that is highly reminiscent of the tenth *tractatus*: 'It is a great and distinguished duty, beloved brothers, and in truth a remarkable kind of *disputatio* to bring into the light of true knowledge the prophetic meanings [*propheticos sensus*] that have been cloaked by the coverings of allegory [*allegoriae integumentis obvolutos*]'.¹⁰⁰ Once again, allegory is something that covers over and conceals truth, and it is associated particularly with the inscrutability of scripture.

In the case of this *lectio*, it is not the subject matter that Gregory finds obscure, but rather the sequence of verses [*sermones*]. His Latin translation of Isaiah begins: 'The vision which Isaiah saw in the reign of Ozias, Joathan, Achat, and Ezechias, kings of Judah. Hear o heaven and give ear o earth, I have begotten and exalted sons, but they have despised me'.¹⁰¹ As Gregory quite rightly notes, the *praetitululus* introduces a vision, but what follows is a rebuke.¹⁰² How can this abrupt transition be understood? There is, moreover, a problem with the *praetitululus* itself. It describes a single vision that Isaiah saw [*vidit*], but it was seen in the reigns of four different kings. He writes, 'This one vision was not seen in the times of four kings, since one vision is seen in one time; for he did not say that Isaiah saw many visions, but he said a single vision, in order that he might show one vision'.¹⁰³

In this homily Gregory provides us with his most sustained reflection on the text of scripture. As we have seen in other homilies, he is far more often concerned with the

¹⁰⁰ *Tract.* 16.1 (CCSL 69, p. 116): *Maximum quidem praeclarumque munus est, dilectissimi fratres, et revera insigne disputationis genus propheticos sensus allegoriae integumentis obvolutos in lucem verae cognitionis aperire.*

¹⁰¹ *Tract.* 16.3-4 (CCSL 69, p. 117): *Visio quam vidit Esaïas in regno Oziae, Ioathan, Achat, Ezechiae, regum Iuda...Audi caelum et percipe auribus terra: filios genui et exaltavi, ipsi autem me spreverunt.*

¹⁰² *Tract.* 16.4 (CCSL 69, p. 117): *Hoc non est visionem referre, sed cum magna indignatione eadem populum increpare; aliud est enim visionem dicere, aliud invectionibus verba proferre; visio etenim oculis ostenditur, verba auribus intimentur.*

¹⁰³ *Tract.* 16.3 (CCSL 69, p. 117): *Cum utique una haec visio quattuor regum temporibus ostensa non fuerit, quasi una visio est uno tempore visa; non enim dicit visiones quas vidit quasi plures, sed visio inquit, ut unam visionem ostenderet.*

characters and events narrated in scripture than with scripture itself. In this instance, however, to explain the confusing sequence of verses, Gregory refers to the intention of the ‘scribe [*scriba*]’: ‘The scribe rightly placed the vision before he introduced the prophet’s rebuke, lest someone think that Isaiah, not being sent by the Lord, rose up in an outcry against the people of Israel rather than preach the word of the Lord’.¹⁰⁴ The sequence does not reflect the temporal order of the events, but rather is used to assure the reader of Isaiah’s prophetic credentials. The reference to scribal activity and the composition of scripture is an anomaly in Gregory’s exegetical writings, but it reflects at least a minimal concern to relate the sequence of the biblical text to his interpretation.

However, just as Gregory offers an explanation for the ordering of the verses that draws upon the human intention of the scribe, he rather awkwardly turns to a theological argument for the opacity and obscurity of scripture:

Hear the counsel of the Holy Spirit. For in nearly all the scriptures the reason for the arrangement can be discovered that the series of scriptures does not go in a straight line. Therefore, for this reason the divine words are inverted, but also many things are said figurally [*figurate*] – some things are referred to in enigmas [*enigmatis*], others are shown typologically [*typice*], others are said allegorically [*allegorice*], and yet others are obscured in parables [*parabolis*] – in order that, since the seducing serpent once deceived humanity in paradise with cunning words, when he persuaded them with a bad interpretation [*mala interpretatione*] to do the opposite of those things which clearly [*simpliciter*] God commanded everyone to obey, and since then the law was clear to man, which the devil himself was able to know, therefore he deceived humanity by evil exhortation. For this reason it was necessary that the Holy Spirit from that time on provide for humanity and speak through parables [*parabolas*] and figures [*figures*], and invert the arrangement of prophecy, lest he again lead them into sin through the law [*mandatum*], seizing the chance, and again kill man through it. Therefore for this reason the scriptures are arranged in parables and obscure words and inverted series, in order that the enemy himself might be mocked by the obscurity of words and be ignorant of time on account of the inverted order and that no other person might understand the meaning [*sensum*] of the Holy Spirit except those people who have the same spirit that spoke in the prophets.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Tract. 16.7 (CCSL 69, p. 118): *Unde et scriba recte prius visionem posuit quam prophetae invectionem inidicaret, ne quis Esaiam non missum a domino in convicium potius populi Israhelis exsurrexisse quam verbum domini nuntiasse putaret.*

¹⁰⁵ Tract. 16.8-10 (CCSL 69, p. 118): *Audite consilium sancti spiritus. Haec enim in omnibus fere scripturis dispositionis ratio invenitur, ut non directo ordine scripturarum series digeratur. Hac ergo de causa praeposterantur verba divina, sed et multa figurate dicuntur – alia enim enigmatis referuntur aut typice indicantur vel allegorice enarrantur aut in parabolis obscurantur – ut, quia aliquando seductor serpens verbis subdolis hominem in paradiso deceperat, dum ea, quae simpliciter deus homini iusserat observare, ille mala interpretatione contraria persuaderet, et quia tunc homini evidens praeceptum fuerat, quod ipse diabolus possit agnoscere, ideo hominem male suadendo decepit. Quare necesse fuit, ut ex eo iam provideret spiritus sanctus homini et per parabolas et figuras loqueretur, praeposteraret quoque, ut iam dictum est, ordines prophetiae, ne quando iterum accepta occasione peccatum per mandatum induceret et per ipsum rursus hominem occideret. Hac ergo de causa in parabolis et obscuris verbis et praeposterata serie scripturae digestae sunt, ut ipse ignoraret et obscuritate verborum inrideter inimicus*

This lengthy passage sits uncomfortably in the homily, for in it Gregory offers an entirely opposite answer to the problem of the seemingly incoherent ordering of verses in Isaiah to the one with which he began. He initially stated that the vision was placed first to assure the reader of Isaiah's prophetic credentials, thereby clarifying what follows. In this hermeneutical excursus, however, Gregory proposes that scripture's order (particularly in the prophets) has been re-arranged precisely to obscure its meaning, thereby leaving Satan in the dark and without the means to trick humanity.

Gregory here attaches serious theological import to the obscurity of scripture. The law was initially given *simpliciter*, so that all could easily understand it. But the clarity of its meaning allowed the serpent, identified as Satan, to know it and thereby use it to lead humanity astray. To protect humanity, therefore, the Holy Spirit, whom Gregory marks as the author of scripture, used *paraboliae* and *figurae* to conceal its true meaning so that only those 'who have the same spirit' can know its true contents.

Simonetti has identified Origen as the source of this reflection on scripture, but that identification is erroneous.¹⁰⁶ Origen makes no such claim in any of his extant writings. Indeed, the only parallel to this obscure passage comes from Hippolytus' fragmentary *In Daniele*: 'This event, however, happened later, but it was written earlier in this book. For it was the custom of scribes to invert the order of many things in the scriptures... This happened by the design of the spirit, so that the devil might not be able to understand the things spoken by the prophets in parables and, ensnaring man a second time, kill him again'.¹⁰⁷ The relationship between the two passages is fairly clear. In both instances, the concern is with the inverted order of scripture, the spirit is identified as the agent responsible for the rearrangement, and the reason is to keep the devil ignorant and unable to trick humanity. The phrase *ne quando iterum accepta*

et de praeposterato ordine tempora ignoraret et nemo alius intellexeret sancti spiritus sensum nisi his, qui eundem spiritum habuisse qui locutus est in prophetis.

¹⁰⁶ Simonetti, 'Gregory of Elvira', p. 88.

¹⁰⁷ *In Daniele* 1.5.2-4 (GCS 1, p. 10): αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ ἱστορία γεγένηται ὕστερον, προεγράφη δὲ τῆς βίβλου πρώτη. ἔθος γὰρ ἦν τοῖς γραμματεῦσιν ὕστερόπρωτα πολλὰ ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς τιθέναι. εὐρίσκομεν γὰρ καὶ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις ὁράσεις τινὰς πρώτας γεγενημένας καὶ ἐπ' ἐσχάτων πεπληρωμένας καὶ αὖ πάλιν ἐπ' ἐσχάτων εἰρημένας καὶ πρώτας γεγενημένας. τοῦτο δὲ οἰκονομία τοῦ πνεύματος ἐγένετο, ἵνα μὴ ὁ διάβολος συνιῇ τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν προφητῶν ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλούμενα καὶ παγιδεύσας ἐκ δευτέρου πάλιν ἀποκτείνῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

occasione peccatum per mandatum induceret et per ipsum rursus hominem occideret is, moreover, a close rendering of ἵνα μὴ ὁ διάβολος συνιῇ τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν προφητῶν ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλούμενα καὶ παγιδεύσας ἐκ δευτέρου πάλιν ἀποκτείνῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπον. Gregory and Hippolytus also refer to the role of the scribe (γραμματεὺς/*scriba*) in the composition of the prophetic books. Indeed, the apparent logical disjunction in the *Tractatus* can be explained on the basis of Gregory's reliance upon the passage of Hippolytus.

The question, however, is whether this passage can be taken as demonstrating Gregory's direct knowledge of Hippolytus. Although this possibility cannot be conclusively ruled out, it is far more likely that Gregory is dependent upon a Latin intermediary. Victorinus of Poetovio is, again, a compelling possibility. M. Dulaey presents a case for Victorinus' knowledge of Hippolytus' *In Daniele*, on the basis of his rather unusual identification in the *De Fabrica Mundi* of the true Sabbath [*verum sabbatum*] as the period in which 'Christ will reign with his elect (cf. *Apoc.* 20:6)', which occurs only in the *In Daniele*.¹⁰⁸ Given that Victorinus' extant writings evidence substantial parallels with other works of Hippolytus, it is not unlikely that he knew the *In Daniele* as well. Significantly, Victorinus himself composed a commentary on Isaiah.¹⁰⁹ It is quite possible that he included Hippolytus' reflection on the nature of prophetic texts and the obscurity of scripture in his *In Isaiam* (he did not write on Daniel), from which Gregory directly borrowed when composing his homilies on that book.

Gregory's most sustained reflection on scripture is thus not his own: it originated in a Greek commentary and was, most likely, mediated through a Latin author. It cannot, moreover, be overemphasized that the original Greek source was Hippolytus, not Origen. Simonetti's error regarding this passage speaks to the scholarly assumption that any hermeneutic that espouses the obscurity of scripture, thereby privileging figural

¹⁰⁸ Victorinus, *De Fabrica Mundi* 6 (SC 423, p. 144): *Quapropter, ut memoravi, verum illud sabbatum est septimum miliarium, in quo Christus cum electis suis regnaturus est.* Hippolytus, *Fragmenta in Daniele* 2.4 (PG 10:645A-B): τὸ σάββατον τύπος ἐστὶ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς μελλούσης βασιλείας τῶν ἁγίων ἡνίκα συμβασιλεύσουσι τῷ Χριστῷ, παραγινόμενου αὐτοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανῶν, ὡς Ἰωάννης ἐν τῇ Ἀποκαλύψει αὐτοῦ διηγείται. See M. Dulaey, *Premier Exégète*, p. 292.

¹⁰⁹ Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 74.

readings of the text, must be Origenian. This feeds the labelling of Gregory as a follower of Origen. But the assumption, much like the conclusion drawn from it, is faulty, as this particular instance demonstrates quite clearly.

Tractatus 17 (Ezek 37)

Gregory's homily on *Ezekiel 37*, which immediately follows the homily on *Isa 1* in the *Tractatus Origenis*, presents an entirely different view of scripture and prophecy.

Following the recitation of the *lectio*, in which God commands Ezekiel to prophesy over the valley of dry bones, Gregory offers the following reflection:

This reading is straightforward [*simplex*], beloved brothers, which was not written allegorically [*per allegoriam*], but has been placed as an example for believers [*ad exemplum credentium*]. Promising the hope of resurrection in the same body, it provides great confidence in eternal life to all Christians...There are, however, many who from outside are thought to be sheep, but *inwardly they are rapacious wolves* (*Matt 7:15*), as the savior says, who seduce and wound the simple-minded [*simplices*] with their discourses, as the serpent did Eve, while they interpret the simplicity [*simplicitatem*] of the heavenly words according to the understanding of their own will [*per voluntatis suae sensum*] and not according to the perfection of the truth [*pro veritatis ipsius absolutione*], denying, as I have said, the resurrection of the flesh.¹¹⁰

The juxtaposition of the two homilies could not be more striking. Gregory here argues for the 'simplicity [*simplicitatem*]' of prophetic discourse. Its meaning is transparent, and it is those with twisted wills who read their heretical doctrines into the plain sense of scripture. Gregory explicitly denies that the prophecy was written *per allegoriam*. The phrase is itself interesting. Once again, he identifies *allegoria* with the veiled and the obscured, contrasting it with that which is *simplex*. *Allegoria* is again associated particularly with writing. This lends some further support to my claim that *allegoria* is, for Gregory, the deliberate concealing of meaning through words, not events.

This is the only instance in the *Tractatus Origenis* in which prophetic meaning is discerned at the literal level of scripture. Throughout the homilies on Genesis and

¹¹⁰ *Tract.* 17.2-3 (CCSL 69, pp.123-4): *Simplex est quidem lectio haec, sanctissimi fratres, quae non per allegoriam scripta est, sed ad exemplum credentium posita. Spem quoque resurrectionis in eodem corpore repromittens magnam fiduciam aeternae vitae Christianis omnibus praestat...Extiterunt multi qui a foris quidem oves putantur, intus autem sunt, ut salvator dixit, lupi rapaces, qui simplices quosque ut serpens Evam in colloquiis sauciant et seducunt, dum caelestium verborum simplicitatem per voluntatis suae sensum et non pro veritatis ipsius absolutione suscipiunt, negantes, ut iam dixi, carnis resurrectionem.*

Exodus, prophecies were concealed in types, figures, and images. In this passage, Gregory argues, the dry bones do not figurally represent the future resurrection of the Christians; this is not a parable. Ezekiel is quite literally observing the reanimation of the bodies of Christians at the eschaton. There is here only one level of meaning, which is the literal level.

Ironically, however, in the one homily where Gregory locates prophetic meaning in the literal level, he offers no exegesis of the text of the *lectio* whatsoever. Indeed, the reading of the *lectio* is one of only two instances in the entire homily where Gregory employs a text from the Old Testament. The homily is a thinly veiled (or, perhaps, not so thinly veiled) *disputatio* against those who deny the resurrection of the flesh,¹¹¹ and it is to *1 Corinthians*, *Ephesians*, and *Romans* that Gregory appeals most frequently.

Tractatus de Arca Noe

Gregory's homily on Noah's ark clearly illustrates several other notable features of his exegetical method, namely numerology and etymology. Much like the *Tractatus Origenis*, the homily was ascribed to Origen in the lone independent manuscript, but has since been firmly identified as Gregorian.¹¹² It serves as an extended reflection upon the significance of the number seven, particularly in relation to the church, linking the seven 'souls' saved from the flood with the seven gifts of the spirit and the seven parts of the body.

The homily opens with Gregory clarifying the typology of the *lectio*: 'This construction [*fabrica*] of the ark clearly revealed [*indicabat*] a type [*typum*] of our church. Noah truly, without doubt, was a figure [*figuram*] of Christ, since Noah, when it

¹¹¹ *Tract.* 17.4 (CCSL 69, p. 124): *Contra quos licet ampla disputatio sit necessaria, tamen nos brevitati studentes pauci ammodum respondere curabimus.*

¹¹² *Codex Legionensis* 22 fol. 154-156: *Incipit tractatus adamantis senis de arca noe*. On the manuscript, see A. Wilmart, 'Un Manuscrit du *Tractatus* du Faux Origène Espagnol sur L'Arche de Noé', *RBén* 29 (1912), pp. 47-59. The text was first attributed to Gregory by Wilmart, 'Arca Noe', *RBén* 26 (1909), pp. 1-11, on the basis that it is 'une pièce de même nature et même facture que les vingt *Tractatus Origenis* et que les cinq homélies sur le Cantique – c'est-à-dire représentant, au total, la même doctrine théologique et les mêmes préoccupations morales, la même méthode d'exégèse et la même Bible, la même éloquence et le même ton, le même style et la même langue' (2). Wilmart first 'discovered' the text embedded in manuscripts of Beatus of Libania's *in Apocalypsin*, as an independent homily following the commentary on the seven letters to the seven churches (*Apoc.* 2-3). The discovery of a manuscript in Spain further confirmed his suspicions of Gregorian provenance.

is translated from Hebrew to Latin, means rest [*requies*], just as his father Lamech prophesied when he named him: *He will make us to rest from our works and from the sorrows of our hands on the earth, which the Lord cursed*'.¹¹³ As we have seen in other homilies, *typus* and *figura* are favored terms of Gregory, and the content of the passage is again Christological. In this instance, however, Gregory links Noah to Christ on the basis of the etymology of his name, which means 'rest'. In what follows, it becomes clear that the 'rest' that Gregory envisions is synonymous with salvation, for 'as Noah, therefore, was alone in all the earth found to be just and was alone, with his household, saved from destruction in the flood of water...thus also when the Lord will come to judge the world in the flame of fire, he will bring an end to all the evil ones of men and fallen angels and to all the wickedness of the world, but to the saints alone he will give rest and the reign of the future age'.¹¹⁴ The narrative of Genesis 6 reveals typologically that the church is the ship captained by Christ, which is the lone refuge from the destruction of the world.

This etymology for Noah is found also in the second of Origen's *Homilies on Genesis*,¹¹⁵ but the way in which Gregory works out the typology is revealingly different. For Origen, it is precisely the disjuncture between Lamech's prophecy and the events of Noah's life that demonstrate that he is a foreshadowing of Christ. Origen asks, 'For in what will it be true that Noah gave rest to that Lamech, or to the people, who then lived in the land, or in what way was the curse upon the land taken away, which the Lord inflicted, when the divine wrath is rather shown to be greater?'¹¹⁶ That Noah did not fulfil these promises demonstrates that Christ is the true Noah. Gregory, however, emphasizes the close parallels between Noah and Christ - it is Noah's very actions, not

¹¹³ *Arca* 4 (CCSL 69, p. 149): *Haec itaque arcae fabrica ecclesiae nostrae tipum perspicue indicabat. Noe vero Christi figuram habuisse nulla est dubitatio, quippe qui ex hebraeo in latino sermone Noe requies appellatur, sicut et pater ipsius Lamech, cum nomen ei imponeret, prophetavit: hic, ait, faciet nos requiescere ab operibus nostris et maeroribus manuum nostrarum a terra, quam execratus est dominus.*

¹¹⁴ *Arca* 5 (CCSL 69, p. 149): *Ut ergo Noe in omni terra solus iustus inventus est et cunctis in cataclismo aquae pereuntibus ipse solus cum domo sua salvatus est...sic et cum venerit dominus iudicare saeculum in flamma ignis, tunc malis hominum ac refugarum angelorum cunctisque mundi sceleribus daturus est finem, sanctis vero solis requiem in regno futuri aevi praebiturus.*

¹¹⁵ *Hom. In Gen.* 2.3.

¹¹⁶ *Hom. In Gen.* 2.3 (SC 7bis, p. 92): *Quomodo enim verum erit quod ille Noe requiem dederat illi Lamech, vel populo, qui tunc habebatur in terris, vel quomodo ablatum est maledictum terrae, quod dederat Dominus, ubi potius iracundia divina maior ostenditur.*

simply the things prophesied about him, which make him a type or figure of Christ. His imaging of Christ lies precisely in what he has done – saving his household from the deluge through his righteousness and obedience – not in what has been left unfulfilled.

Much of the remainder of the homily is concerned with detailing the various occurrences of the number ‘seven’ in scripture and its relevance for an understanding of the church. This begins when Gregory asserts that ‘the seven souls, which were given to the righteous and holy Noah, are known to be a type [*typum*] of the seven churches, which through Christ will escape the destruction of the fire of judgment and will reign with Christ in the new earth’.¹¹⁷ The church, however, remains mysteriously one. For, just as a body has many different parts, so too the church: ‘For just as *the body is one* and there are seven parts or seven duties [*officia*] of parts – that is head, hands, feet, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling – thus also the body of the church is one, but by the grace of the septiform charisms.’¹¹⁸ Gregory proceeds to demonstrate the cosmological significance of seven, listing occurrences of the number primarily in the *Apocalypse*, but also in *Exodus*, *Proverbs*, *Isaiah*, and *Zachariah*.¹¹⁹ Of most significance, perhaps, are the seven ‘charisms’ in *Isaiah* 11:2: ‘I shall demonstrate [*approbo*] briefly that there are seven churches in one single church. For there are seven gifts of charism, as the Lord deigned to reveal through Isaiah the famous prophet: *And the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, of counsel, of virtue, of knowledge, of piety, and the spirit of the fear of God will rest upon him*’.¹²⁰ No one, save Christ, possesses all seven charisms and it is

¹¹⁷ *Arca* 6 (CCSL 69, pp. 149-50): *Septem autem animae, quae Noe sancto et iusto donantur, septem ecclesiarum typum habuisse noscuntur, quae per Christum excidium iudicialis incendii sunt evasurae et in nova terra cum Christo sunt regnaturaе.* The *septem animae* are Noah’s wife, his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives.

¹¹⁸ *Arca* 7 (CCSL 69, p. 150): *Sicut enim corpus unum est et septem sunt membra vel septem membrorum officia, id est caput manus pedes visus auditus gustus odoratus, ita et unum est corpus ecclesiae, sed septiformis carismatum gratia.*

¹¹⁹ *Arca* 7 (CCSL 69, p. 150): *Sed et septem oculi domini (Zach 4:10; Apoc 5:6) et septem stellae in dextera sedentis in trono (Apoc 1:16; 2:1) et septem candelabra aurea (Apoc 1:12) et septem lucernae in tabernaculo domini (Ex 37:23) et septem angeli (Apoc 8:6; 15:7), septem tubae (Apoc 8:2), septem fialae, septem mulieres adprehendentes hominem unum (Is 4:1), id est virtutes ecclesiae Christum tenentes, et septem columnae apud Salomonem (Prov 9:1), quibus domus ecclesiae fulcitur atque erigitur.* This list is closely paralleled in Victorinus, *Fabr.* 8 (SC 423, p. 146).

¹²⁰ *Arca* 9 (CCSL 69, p. 150): *In unaquaque ecclesia septem ecclesias esse breviter adprobabo. Septem enim sunt carismatum dona, ut per Esaiam vatem inclytum dominus manifestare dignatus est: Et requiescet, ait, super eum spiritus sapientiae, spiritus intelligentiae, consilii, virtutis, agnitionis, pietatis,*

only by coming together, in a spirit of co-operation, that the Church can be ‘one, whole, and perfect’ and thus truly become the body of Christ.¹²¹ Gregory’s ecclesiology, on the basis of a numerological exegesis of *Genesis* 6, demands a pluriformity in unity.

Since, moreover, the ark is the vessel of salvation for humanity, in its very construction it mirrors the future dwelling places of the saints: ‘In one deck [*camera*] is a figure [*figura*] of paradise, in the other of the new earth, where the heavenly Jerusalem will descend (cf. *Apoc* 21:3), in order that it will be made, as it is written, *the dwelling of God with humanity*... in the third deck is a [figure] of the heavenly kingdoms.’¹²² Once again, the *Apocalypse* serves as a significant intertext. The eschatological significance which Gregory attaches to his typological reading of Noah’s ark encourages him to read *Genesis* and the *Apocalypse* in light of one another. Quite significantly, Origen, interprets the three *camerae* as the three *expositiones* in Scripture: *historica, mystica, moralem*. He observes further that since the ark is *bicamerata sed et tricamerata*, this indicates that Scripture can have either two or three senses, with the historical sense occasionally being absent.¹²³ Yet Gregory does not adopt this distinctly Origenian exegetical move, nor do we have any such clear articulation of a threefold hermeneutic anywhere else in his extant corpus.

Gregory concludes the homily with a series of numerological reflections on the dimensions of the ark. He says that the ‘length of three-hundred cubits [*trecentorum cubitorum longitudo*] clearly reveals a figure [*figuram*] of the Lord’s crucifixion’, since ‘the letter tau is signified by 300 among the Greeks’ and that letter resembles the cross

spiritus timoris dei. Victorinus, *Fabr.* 7 (SC 423, p. 144), links the seven days of creation with the seven heavens and with the ‘seven spirits’, also citing *Is* 11:2 in a slightly different form.

¹²¹ *Arca* 13 (CCSL 69, p. 151): *Cum enim separati sumus, singuli singula carismata habemus; cum autem in unum convenimus, omnes unam et integram et perfectam septiformem ecclesiam, quae Christi corpus est, facimus.*

¹²² *Arca* 15-16 (CCSL 69, p. 151): *In una etenim camera paradisi figura est, in altera terrae novae – ubi Ierusalem caelestis est descensura, ut fiat in ea, sicut scriptum est, habitatio dei cum hominibus; de qua terra beatus Ioannes ait: Et vidi, ait, caelum novum et terram novam et civitatem Ierusalem caelestem, descendentem de caelo in terram novam, et Esaias: Sicut caelum novum et terram novam, quam ego facio perseverare in conspectu meo, sic perseverabit semen vestrum et nomen vestrum, dicit dominus omnipotens; in tertia camera caelorum regnum.*

¹²³ *Hom. In Gen.* 2.6 (SC 7bis, pp. 106-8).

in its appearance.¹²⁴ The latitude of fifty cubits, moreover, ‘signified Pentecost, that is the fiftieth day after the passion of the Lord’s crucifixion’.¹²⁵ Thirdly, the height of thirty cubits ‘demonstrated the age of our Lord’.¹²⁶

Summary

In his homilies, Gregory has left us with a number of clear statements regarding the nature of scripture and his understanding of the exegetical task. But, as we have seen, they do not always fit neatly together. In the *tractatus* on the opening chapter of *Isaiah* (*Tract.* 16), Gregory appeals to the obscurity and opacity of prophetic discourse, elaborating a hermeneutic according to which the true meaning of scripture has been concealed under allegories, so that it might not be manipulated by Satan for the corruption of humanity. The task of the interpreter is an arduous one, who must penetrate the mysteries of parables and of rearranged passages. This accords well with his allegorical interpretation of the temple sacrifice in his homily on *Leviticus* 22 (*Tract.* 10), in which he discerned no literal meaning in the text. In his exposition of *Ezekiel* 37, however, Gregory takes the opposite approach, emphasizing the clarity of the prophecy, arguing for a purely ‘literal’ interpretation, and chastising heretics for misrepresenting what has been clearly set forth. In certain passages there is only an ‘allegorical’ level of meaning, in others there is only a ‘literal’ level, and in the vast majority there is both; Gregory, however, makes no attempt to give a holistic account of scripture that takes into account these differences.

¹²⁴ *Arca* 29 (CCSL 69, p. 154): *Mensura vero arcae trecentorum cubitorum longitudo figuram dominicae crucis evidenter ostendit; trecenti etenim apud Graecos tau littera signantur, quae littera unam apicem quasi arborem erectam facit, alteram vero ut antemnam in capite extensam, crucis utique habitum demonstraret.* He may have derived this from Ps.-Cyp. *De Pascha Computus* (PL 4:965A): *CCC autem apud Graecos per unam litteram notantur quae dicitur tau, et manifeste demonstrat omnibus tau crucis signum*, which is likely here dependent upon Tertullian.

¹²⁵ *Arca* 30 (CCSL 69, p. 154): *Quinquaginta autem cubita latitudinis eiusdem arcae hoc significabat quod pentecosten, id est quinquagesima die post passionem dominicae crucis, spiritus sanctus descensus esset, per quem et spem salutis et caelestis regni gloriam consequi et obtinere possumus.*

¹²⁶ *Arca* 31 (CCSL 69, p. 154): *Triginta vero cubitis altitudo arcae tricenariam aetatem domini demonstrat, quia hominem quem induit per officium Iohannis in Iordane baptizavit; triginta etenim annorum erat, ut evangelista testatur, cum per aquam baptismatis susceptum, ut dixi, hominem donis caelestibus inlustraret.*

His exegetical method is, perhaps, not more consistent. The historical narrative generally interests him little, to the point where it is almost entirely ignored in a number of homilies. When interpreting the visit of the three angels to Abraham at the oaks of Mambre (*Tract.* 2), Gregory passes over any attempt to set forth the narrative sequence or historical context, turning straightaway to a typological interpretation of the various elements of the passage. Using a term coined by F. Young, it is a prime example of ‘symbolic exegesis’, in which the interpreter ‘decode[s] symbols without worrying about textual or narrative coherence’.¹²⁷ Similarly, in his homilies pertaining to cultic sacrifice (*Tract.* 9 and 10), the allegorical referent becomes so transparent to the letter that the latter disappears from consideration entirely. By contrast, however, in the fifth *tractatus* on Joseph, Gregory undertakes a (comparatively) lengthy analysis of the history of the narrative, since the theme of chastity suits his agenda particularly well.

These hermeneutical and methodological discrepancies should not be surprising, however. Gregory was a preacher, whose role it was to relate the day’s *lectio* to the lives of his hearers. The account of God’s command to Abraham that he and his household be circumcised provided an opportunity for a *certamen* against the Jews (*Tract.* 4), whereas Gregory used Ezekiel’s prophesying over dry bones as a means to initiate a *disputatio* against heretics who denied the resurrection of the body (*Tract.* 16). Both the story of Joseph’s seduction by Potiphar’s wife and the rather tedious description of the acceptable temple sacrifice could be used to exhort his congregation to chastity, virtue, and temperance (*Tract.* 5; 10). None of Gregory’s extant writings give any indication that he was interested in articulating a comprehensive doctrine of scripture that would provide a well-defined framework for interpreting the text, and such a task may well have seemed counter-intuitive, if not irrelevant.

But Gregory, it should be clear, was not without hermeneutical presuppositions that consistently guided his exegesis, however implicit certain elements may have been. First, in the vast majority of cases, scripture has two clear levels of meaning: the historical and the figural. There are unique occasions when there is only one, but there

¹²⁷ F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), p. 184.

are never more than two. Moreover, whatever significance he might attach to the literal narrative of scripture, the coherence of meaning is almost always to be found in the typology of the text. His favoured terms for denoting the figural meaning are *figura*, *typus*, *imago*, and *similitudo*, which he uses interchangeably.¹²⁸ *Allegoria*, a term that Gregory rarely uses, appears to be distinct from that grouping. Gregory refers to things that have been composed allegorically [*per allegoriam*, *allegorice*] when he is exegeting a particularly obscure passage, and the term *allegoria* seems to denote a reality concealed *in verbis* and not *in rebus*. It is also important to note that the same interpretive ‘level’ can contain multiple meanings – the *aqua de utre* in *Gen* 21:16 can signify both the Jewish purification rituals and the letter of Scripture, but these both pertain to the triumph of the church and the rejection of the Jews. Secondly, Gregory emphasizes the prophetic nature of the Old Testament, and the prophecies are almost always discerned at the figural level, concealed in types, figures, and images. Indeed, the figural meaning of a text is almost always, with the exception of the tenth *tractatus*, prophetic, pertaining to the coming of Christ, the establishing of the church, the displacement of the synagogue, and the final judgment. It is, moreover, through prophecy that two testaments comprise a unity: the Old Testament prefigures what is fulfilled in the New. The New Testament is ontologically superior to the Old, since the Spirit ‘spoke typologically [*typice*] in the law and plainly [*manifeste*] in the apostles’.¹²⁹ The two are related as type and anti-type. Thirdly, the unity of the two testaments, composed under the direction of the Holy Spirit, allows Gregory to employ texts from different portions of scripture to illuminate one another. In certain instances, there is a ‘primary intertext’ – that is, a text drawn from another portion of scripture that is used as the interpretive lens for the *lectio*. A very clear example of this is the homily on *Lev* 22, in which *Rom* 12:1, ‘Present your body as a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, your rational service’, is used as the key for the figural interpretation of the sacrificial lamb.

¹²⁸ *Imago* and *similitudo* are synonymous when Gregory uses them to refer to biblical figures and events as prophetic types (cf. 2.29, 4.13, 5.1, 9.1). They are, however, central terms to his anthropology, and are distinct in that regard. See, esp., *Tract.* 1.5-27 (CCSL 69, pp. 6-11). *Typus*, *imago*, *figura*, and *similitudo* were also widely employed by earlier and contemporary Latin authors. See the instructive comparative study by J-P Brisson, SC 29, pp. 19-25.

¹²⁹ *Tract.* 11.3-4 (CCSL 69, p. 84).

Fourthly, names, numbers, and (Greek) letters can have hidden prophetic significance, as we saw was especially the case in the *De arca noe*.

2. Origen and Gregory

In addition to giving a detailed account of Gregory's hermeneutics and exegetical method through a close reading of his homilies, the aim of the present chapter is to contest the pervasive claim in Gregorian studies that Gregory is 'imbued with Origen's hermeneutics'¹³⁰ and that he engaged closely with the writings of the famed Alexandrian exegete, presumably in translation.¹³¹ I will challenge these presuppositions through a brief comparative analysis of Origen's and Gregory's hermeneutics. Scholars who have labelled Gregory an 'Origenian' have neglected the task of identifying what are the distinctive marks of Origen's exegesis. As we saw earlier, this lack of care caused Simonetti to identify erroneously a portion of the sixteenth *tractatus* as indebted to Origen, when in fact it originates with Hippolytus and has no connection to the Alexandrian theologian, and it has led nearly all scholars to attribute to Gregory a doctrine of three senses of Scripture, when he does not posit this at all. The subject of Origen's hermeneutics could constitute a dissertation in itself and it will not be exhaustively treated here. But I shall attempt to draw out some key distinctions through a close reading of *De Principiis* 4.2.2-6. This section is primarily indebted to the research of R. Gögler, K. Torjesen, B. Neuschafer, F. Young, and E.A. Dively Lauro, whose challenges to the influential monographs of J. Danielou, H. de Lubac, and R.P.C. Hanson highlight even more clearly the distinctions between Origen and Gregory.

De Principiis 4.1-3

There has been no little controversy over Origen's biblical hermeneutics, regarding both the interpretation of the hermeneutical mini-treatise in *DP* 4.1-3 and the consistency with which he applies the principles elaborated therein. Rather than give a lengthy

¹³⁰ de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, p. 156.

¹³¹ Simonetti, 'Gregory of Elvira', p. 89.

account of the scholarly debate, we shall begin with an analysis of the *De Principiis* itself, focusing particularly on 4.2.2-6, in dialogue with some of the significant recent interpretations of the text.

Origen begins the fourth book of the *De Principiis* by praising Moses ‘the Hebrew law-giver’ and ‘Jesus Christ, the introducer of the saving doctrines of Christianity’.¹³² He argues that lawgivers, whether Greek or Barbarian, are rarely able to succeed in spreading their laws outside of their own nation, but the teachings of both Moses and Jesus spread ‘all over Greece and in the barbarian part of our world’.¹³³ And, in the case of Jesus, this occurred over a few years in spite of the fact that those who profess Christianity are subject to persecution, the loss of property, and even death. Origen relates the discussion concretely to scripture by noting that Jesus prophesied both the rapid spread of his teachings (cf. *Matt* 24:14, preserved only in the Latin) and the persecution at the hands of authorities that his followers would endure (cf. *Matt* 10:18). That such prophecies were fulfilled demonstrates, for Origen, that ‘God has really become man and delivered to men the doctrines of salvation’.¹³⁴ But this was not only prophesied by Christ, Origen continues to argue, but was predicted in the texts of the Old Testament.¹³⁵ The books of the law and the prophets are thus clearly divinely inspired, but they can only be known as such in the light of Christ’s incarnation: ‘But the advent of Jesus led those who might have suspected that the law and the prophets were not divine to the clear conviction that they were composed by the aid of heavenly grace’.¹³⁶ The fulfilment of prophecy is proof of divine inspiration.

Christ serves as a paedagogue, at whose coming ‘the veil was taken away and there came at once to men’s knowledge those *good things* of which the letter of the law

¹³² *DP* 4.1.1 (Koetschau, p. 293; ET Butterworth, p. 256): περὶ Μωσέως καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ νομοθέτου τῶν Εβραίων καὶ τοῦ εἰσηγητοῦ τῶν κατὰ χριστιανισμὸν σωτηρίων δογμάτων, ταῦτα διαληπτέον.

¹³³ *DP* 4.1.1 (Koetschau, p. 294; ET Butterworth, p. 257): πᾶσα δὲ Ἑλλὰς καὶ Βάρβαρος.

¹³⁴ *DP* 4.1.2 (Koetschau, p. 296; ET Butterworth, p. 259): θεὸν ἀληθῶς ἐνανθρωπήσαντα σωτηρίας δόγματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραδεδωκέναι.

¹³⁵ *DP* 4.1.3-5. The texts that Origen cites are Gen 39:10; Deut 32:21; Ps 44:1-3; Is 7:14, 8:8-9; Job 3:8.

¹³⁶ *DP* 4.1.6 (Koetschau, p. 302; ET Butterworth, p. 264): ἀλλ’ ἡ Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημία δυναμένους ὑποπεύεσθαι τὸν νόμον καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας ὥς οὐ θεῖα εἰς τοῦμφανὲς ἤγαγεν ὥς οὐρανίῳ χάριτι ἀναγεγραμμένα.

held a *shadow*'.¹³⁷ It is through him that both the 'saving doctrines' are taught to humanity and the Old Testament is revealed to be of divine origin. This is because he is not only the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, but also their source, as Origen asserts in the preface to the *De Principiis*.¹³⁸ Unsurprisingly, since the 'good things' of scripture were held in 'shadow' in the law, the Old Testament is not easily interpreted. Origen details the interpretive errors of the Jews, heretics, and simple Christians, who hold only to a literal reading [πρὸς τὸ ψιλὸν γράμμα] of the Old Testament and thereby are misled to reject Christ, posit a higher deity than the Creator, or hold onto other impious doctrines.¹³⁹ There are 'mystical revelations [οἰκονομίαι μυστικάι]' throughout the 'divine scriptures [θείων γραφῶν]', which require a proper method of interpretation to be discerned. And these are not restricted only to the law and the prophets. Origen claims that arriving at an 'accurate interpretation of [the Gospels], being the interpretation [νοῦς] of Christ, requires grace' and that the letters of Paul provide 'a narrow opening leading to multitudes of the deepest thoughts'.¹⁴⁰

Origen discerns the correct way [ἡ οδός] of interpreting scripture [τὸν νοῦν αὐτῶν ἐκλαμβάνειν] from scripture itself: 'Do you portray them threefold in counsel and knowledge, that you might answer words of truth to those who question you (Prov 12:20-21)'.¹⁴¹ He therefore exhorts the exegete 'to inscribe the meanings [τὰ νοήματα] of the holy scriptures upon one's soul in a three-fold way',¹⁴² so that the simpler hearer [ὁ ἀπλούστερος] can be edified by the flesh [ἡ σὰρξ] of scripture, the more advanced [ὁ ποσὸν ἀναβεβηκώς] by the soul [ἡ ψυχὴ] of scripture, and the perfect [ὁ τέλειος]

¹³⁷ DP 4.1.6 (Koetschau, p. 302; ET Butterworth, p. 265): συνέλαμψε τῇ Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημίαι, περιαιρεθέντος τοῦ καλύμματος, καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κατὰ βραχὺ εἰς γνώσιν ἐρχομένων, ὧν σκιὰν εἶχε τὸ γράμμα.

¹³⁸ DP Praef.1 (Koetschau, p. 7): *Christi autem verbis dicimus non his solum, quae homo factus atque in carne positus docuit; et prius namque Christus dei verbum in Moyse atque in prophetis erat.*

¹³⁹ DP 4.2.1 (Koetschau, pp. 305-8).

¹⁴⁰ DP 4.2.3 (Koetschau, p. 310; ET Butterworth, p. 274, modified): κὰν ἐπὶ τὰ εὐαγγέλια δὲ φθάσωμεν, κακείνων ὁ ἀκριβὴς νοῦς, ἅτε νοῦς ὢν Χριστοῦ, δεῖται χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης τῷ εἰρκότι...μεγίστων καὶ πλείστων νοημάτων βραχεῖαν ἀφορμὴν παρεχόντων.

¹⁴¹ DP 4.2.4 (Koetschau, p. 312; ET Butterworth, p. 275, modified): καὶ σὺ δὲ ἀπόγραψαι αὐτὰ τρισῶς ἐν βουλῇ καὶ γνώσει, τοῦ ἀποκρίνασθαι λόγους ἀληθείας τοῖη προβαλλομένοις σοι.

¹⁴² DP 4.2.4 (Koetschau, p. 312; ET Butterworth, p. 275, revised): οὐκοῦν τριχῶς ἀπογράφεσθαι δεῖ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν τὰ τῶν ἁγίων γραμμάτων νοήματα.

by the spiritual law [ὁ πνευματικός νόμος].¹⁴³ At this point in the treatise, Origen leaves the content of the terms ‘flesh’, ‘soul’, and ‘spirit’ undefined, save to say that the ‘flesh’ is the ‘obvious interpretation [τὴν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχήν]’. Origen supports this threefold account of Scripture through a figural reading of the *Shepherd of Hermas*.¹⁴⁴ Hermas is commissioned to write two books – one to Grapte and one to Clement – and then ‘announce to the presbyters of the Church what he has learned from the Spirit’.¹⁴⁵ Grapte and Clement signify ‘the bare letter’ [ψιλόν τὸ γράμμα] and ‘one who has gone beyond the letter [ὁ τοῦ γράμματος ἐξιστάμενος]’, respectively, with the former being charged with the care of ‘orphans [ὀρφανούς]’, who do not have God as Father, and the latter with the care of souls no longer weighed down with bodily concerns. Hermas, the ‘disciple of the Spirit’ speaks directly, not through books, to the ‘presbyters’, who signify the spiritual ones.¹⁴⁶ There are, however, certain instances, Origen asserts, when there are only two meanings in a passage, since certain ‘scriptures have nothing bodily’ and the reader ought ‘to seek only the soul and spirit of the text’.¹⁴⁷ Presumably, these ‘bodiless’ texts are unsuitable for the edification of ‘simpler Christians’, for whom that level of meaning is intended, though Origen does not here iterate any pastoral or pedagogical directives concerning such texts.

As Origen later says, however, the texts ‘which are historically true are far more numerous than those which are composed with purely spiritual meanings’.¹⁴⁸ And, indeed, he affirms that the great number of simple Christians demonstrates that it is possible ‘to derive benefit from the first, and to this extent helpful, interpretation [ἐκδοχῆς]’.¹⁴⁹ He then proceeds to speak about the other two meanings or explanations

¹⁴³ DP 4.2.4 (Koetschau, p. 312-13).

¹⁴⁴ My reading of this passage is indebted to the insightful analysis of E.A. Dively Lauro, *Soul and Spirit*, pp. 80-84.

¹⁴⁵ DP 4.2.4 (Koetschau, p. 313; ET Butterworth, p. 276): δύο γράψαι βιβλία καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα αὐτὸν ἀναγγέλειν τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἃ μεμάθηκεν ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος.

¹⁴⁶ DP 4.2.4 (Koetschau, p. 313; ET Butterworth, p. 277).

¹⁴⁷ DP 4.2.5 (Koetschau, p. 314; ET Butterworth, pp. 277-8, modified): Ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ εἰσὶ τινες γραφαὶ τὸ σωματικὸν οὐδαμῶς ἔχουσαι, ὥς ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς δεῖξομεν, ἔστιν ὅπου οἰονεὶ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῇ γραφῇ μόνον χρὴ ζητεῖν.

¹⁴⁸ DP 4.3.4 (Koetschau, p. 329; ET Butterworth, p. 295): πολλῶν γὰρ πλειονὰ ἔστι τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν ἀληθευόμενα τῶν προσφανεμένων γυμνῶν πνευματικῶν.

¹⁴⁹ DP 4.2.6 (Koetschau, p. 315; ET Butterworth, p. 278, modified): Ἀπὸ μὲ οὖν τῆς πρώτης ἐκδοχῆς καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὠφελούσης ὅτι ἔστιν ὄνασθαι...

in scripture. Notably, he does not refer to the ‘soul’ of scripture, as he did in *DP* 4.2.4, but rather to the ‘kind of explanation that penetrates as into the soul [τῆς δὲ ὥς ἂν εἰς ψυχὴν ἀναγομένης διηγήσεως παράδειγμα]’.¹⁵⁰ Paul’s figural interpretation of *Deut* 25:4 (*1 Cor* 9:9-10), in which he identifies the ox as a human labourer, serves as the example. The distinguishing feature of this διήγησις seems to be the identification of a general moral precept, namely that it is right for workers to receive and employers to provide fair compensation. Origen acknowledges that explanations that penetrate into the soul have ‘something of the same character [χαρακτῆρα]’ as those interpretations that are meant for those ‘who are not able to hear the higher meanings [τοὺς ὑψηλοτέρων ἀκούειν μὴ δυναμένους]’ – that is, somatic interpretations.¹⁵¹ The difference may lie in the historical particularity of the somatic interpretation and the general application of the psychic explanation, in which the hearer is identified with one or more the characters in the narrative. The spiritual explanation [πνευματικὴ διήγησις] pertains to the ‘heavenly things the Jews according to the flesh served as a copy and shadow, and of the coming good things the law has a shadow’.¹⁵² His citation of *1 Cor* 10:11 – ‘these things happened to them typologically [τυπικῶς], but were written for us, upon whom the end of the ages has come’ – demonstrates the eschatological import of ‘spiritual explanations’, and the citation of *1 Cor* 10:4 – ‘For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ’ – shows the Christological content.¹⁵³ Above all, the spiritual level consists of ‘wisdom hidden in mystery [σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην]’ (*1 Cor* 2:7-8).

Ultimately, however, Origen returns to a dichotomous account of scripture, proposing the presence of two divinely ordained σκοποί in the text. The principal σκοπός of the text, under the guidance and enlightenment ‘of the Spirit, by the

¹⁵⁰ *DP* 4.2.6 (Koetschau, p. 315; ET Butterworth, p. 279, modified).

¹⁵¹ *DP* 4.2.6 (Koetschau, p. 315; ET Butterworth, p. 279, modified): καὶ πλείστοι δὲ περιφερόμεναι τοῖς πλήθεσιν ἀρμόζουσαι ἐρμηνεῖαι καὶ οἰκοδομοῦσαι τοὺς ὑψηλοτέρων ἀκούειν μὴ δυναμένους τὸν αὐτὸν πῶς ἔχουσι χαρακτῆρα.

¹⁵² *DP* 4.2.6 (Koetschau, pp. 315-16; ET Butterworth, p. 279, modified): ποίων ἐπ’ οὐρανίων ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ οἱ κατὰ σὰρκα Ἰουδαῖοι ἐλάτρευον, καὶ τίνων μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν ὁ νόμος ἔχει σκιάν.

¹⁵³ *DP* 4.2.6 (Koetschau, p. 316).

providence of God, through the Word',¹⁵⁴ is to instruct 'souls' in the 'deep things revealed in the spiritual meaning of the words', namely the doctrines [δογμάτα] of God, the Son (including his pre-existence, Incarnation, and relation to the Father), anthropology, and eschatology.¹⁵⁵ The secondary aim [δεύτερος σκοπός] is the concealing of hidden doctrines 'in words forming a narrative [ἐν λέξεσιν ἐμφαινούσαις διήγησιν]' for the edification of those not capable of discerning the mysteries: 'For the intention was to make even the outer covering of the spiritual truths [τὸ ἔνδυμα τῶν πνευματικῶν], I mean the bodily part of the scriptures [τὸ σωματικὸν τῶν γραφῶν], in many respects not unprofitable but capable of improving the multitude in so far as they receive it'.¹⁵⁶ But Origen reminds his readers that 'stumbling-blocks [σκάνδαλα]' were placed in the text so that the saving doctrines would be sought by those who were able.¹⁵⁷

There are, I would argue, three distinctive marks of Origen's hermeneutics present in this passage, which are not paralleled in Gregory's own biblical interpretation: the anthropological analogy of scripture; the equality of the two Testaments; and the significance of the 'letter' of scripture. In what follows, I shall give a brief analysis of each and contrast it with Gregory's own approach:

(i) The anthropological analogy

Gregory's claim in the fifth *Tractatus* that there is a *triplicem significantiam* (*prophetia, historia, figura*) in Scripture has been uncritically accepted as being directly reliant upon Origen's threefold [τριχῶς] account of Scripture in *DP* 4.2.4. Before even turning to a comparison of the two, it should be noted that there is a vigorous scholarly debate over Origen's precise meaning in the *De Principiis*. The passage has long been taken as referring to three distinct 'senses' in scripture – the historical, moral, and mystical –

¹⁵⁴ *DP* 4.2.7 (Koetschau, p. 318; ET Butterworth, p. 282): καὶ πρῶτόν γε τοῦτο ὑποδεικτέον, ὅτι ὁ σκοπὸς τῷ φωτίζοντι πνεύματι προνοίαι θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ...λογου. Cf. *DP* 4.2.9 (Koetschau, p. 321): ὅτι τοῦ προηγουμένου σκοποῦ.

¹⁵⁵ *DP* 4.2.7-8 (Koetschau, pp. 319-20).

¹⁵⁶ *DP* 4.2.8-9 (Koetschau, pp. 320-21; ET Butterworth, pp. 284-5).

¹⁵⁷ *DP* 4.2.9 (Koetschau, pp. 321-22).

much along the lines of the later medieval four-fold scheme, which would first be articulated by Cassian in his *Conlationes* (14.8). As de Lubac, and Hanson point out, however, Origen does not often give three different interpretations of individual verses, generally neglecting the ‘moral sense’ of a text.¹⁵⁸

Torjesen, however, argues that Origen was not inconsistent, for he did not promote ‘three separate and self-contained senses of the same text’.¹⁵⁹ Rather, following R. Gögler, she argues that Origen’s doctrine of Scripture hinges on the pedagogical activity of the Logos within it.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, in Scripture there is an ‘order of doctrines which corresponds to the progressive steps of the Christian’s movement towards perfection’.¹⁶¹ Origen is not concerned to draw out three discrete senses in each passage of Scripture, but rather to argue that there is a continuum of stages through which the soul must pass on its ascent to God and that Scripture, through the mediating activity of the Logos, speaks to each one at its own level, drawing it upward. Torjesen argues that the threefold account that Origen gives to Scripture cannot be understood apart from the anthropological analogy that he uses to elucidate its nature and function: ‘Whereas his universal coming was in the flesh and his coming to the saints was in prophetic voice, he comes to the individual in Scripture, clothing himself in language in order to become visible and so offering himself in a form suited to each individual soul’.¹⁶² Origen himself powerfully makes this point in the *Homilies on Leviticus*: ‘For just as he is there covered with flesh, he is also under the veil of the letter, in order that the letter, like the flesh, might be seen, but hidden within the spiritual sense is perceived just as the divinity’.¹⁶³ Moreover, her approach of focusing more broadly on the pedagogy of the whole of Scripture, rather than on particular meanings of individual verses, has support in Origen’s prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, where

¹⁵⁸ H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit*, (Paris: Cerf, 2002 [1950]), pp. 141ff; R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, p. 236.

¹⁵⁹ K. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen’s Exegesis* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), p. 41.

¹⁶⁰ R. Gögler, *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1963).

¹⁶¹ K. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, p. 41.

¹⁶² K. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, p. 118. Cf. Gögler, *Theologie*, pp. 260-70.

¹⁶³ *Hom. In Lev. 1.1* (SC 286, p. 66): *Nam sicut ibi carnis, ita hic litterae velamine tegitur, ut littera quidem adspiciatur tamquam caro, latens vero intrinsecus spiritalis sensus tamquam divinitas sentiatur.*

he argues that the three books of Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) are written for souls at different stages of perfection and must be read in their proper sequence.¹⁶⁴

E.A. Dively Lauro has recently challenged both earlier scholars who criticized Origen for his lack consistency (e.g., De Lubac, Hanson) and K. Torjesen, who defended Origen on the grounds that his intent was not to posit the existence of three ‘senses’ of scripture. She argues that Origen indeed offers a consistent ‘method of exegesis that relies on three senses or meanings of Scripture, and he defines the distinct focus and function of each sense when applied to a biblical passage’.¹⁶⁵ Although she agrees that Origen privileges the pedagogical function of Scripture, she believes that he expresses this concretely by positing the existence of three discrete meanings in each biblical text, which are identified with the three different stages of the soul’s progress. She offers as evidence Origen’s various references to distinct meanings in Scripture in the *De Principiis*. In *DP* 4.2.4 he says that one must write in a threefold way the νοήματα of the scriptures upon one’s soul. Moreover, in *DP* 4.2.5, he refers specifically to the ψυχικὸν λόγον and the πνευματικὸν λόγον in Scripture, and in *DP* 4.2.6 Origen defines specifically the content of these two ‘senses’. She then offers several examples from his exegetical works where he speaks of three discrete senses, which have their own independent content.¹⁶⁶ The pneumatic reading of Scripture, she argues, always pertains to Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and soteriology, whereas the psychic reading focuses upon the soul’s cultivation of the virtues.¹⁶⁷

Torjesen and Dively Lauro both offer compelling accounts of Origen’s exegetical method, but ultimately stretch their conclusions too far. Torjesen established that the decisive feature of Origen’s hermeneutics was his understanding of the pedagogical activity of the Logos in Scripture, but her dismissal of the idea that he

¹⁶⁴ *Comm. In Cant.* prol.2.

¹⁶⁵ E.A. Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture Within Origen’s Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 37.

¹⁶⁶ *Hom. In Gen.* 11.3: *secundum litteram...secundum spiritum...moralem locum*; *Hom. In Lev.* 5.5.3: *historicum, moralem, mysticum*; *Hom. In Num.* 9.7: *litterae facies...moralis doctrina...mysteriorum sensum*; *Hom. In Gen.* 2.6: *historica...mystica...moralem*. See E.A. Dively Lauro, *Soul and Spirit*, pp. 94-130.

¹⁶⁷ Dively Lauro, *Soul and Spirit*, p. 191-94.

believed there to be three discrete senses in individual passages of Scripture seems at odds both with *DP* 4.2.4-6 and a number of his homilies. Dively Lauro demonstrates quite clearly that in his theoretical scheme Origen understands there to be three distinct levels of meaning in Scripture, each with its own specific content, and that he works this out with a large measure of consistency in his practice. But the concrete examples of Origen actually elaborating three senses of biblical passages in his exegesis nonetheless remain frustratingly few. Their error lies, perhaps, in wanting complete and utter consistency from a man who wrote and preached as much as Origen.

Each study, however, combats the excesses of the other and the two together present us with a clear picture of the fundamentals of the anthropological analogy: the primary function of Scripture is the *paideia* of the soul, achieved through the pedagogy of the Logos, which is worked out concretely through the placement of three different interdependent yet hierarchically arranged meanings in the text of Scripture, which correspond to the three parts of the person – body, soul, and spirit. The contrast with Gregory could not be more patent. He equates the *triplicem significantiam* of Scripture in *Tract.* 5.1 with *prophetia*, *historia*, and *figura*. These three elements are not arranged hierarchically and do not correspond with the *corpus*, *anima*, and *spiritus* of Scripture in Origen, and as I argued above they do not constitute three ‘levels of meaning’ or ‘senses’ in the biblical text. For Gregory, there are only two ways in which Scripture speaks: historically and figurally. The prophetic element of Scripture can be ascertained at either level, though it is generally concealed in types and figures. There is, moreover, no evidence that Gregory has any well-developed understanding of Scripture’s role in the pedagogy of the soul. To be certain, Scripture provides moral exhortation, liturgical proscription, and doctrinal precepts, but there is no sense that these are arranged in any particularly ordered way to guide the soul from one level of progress to the next. Indeed, the notion of the ascent of the soul to God, so central to both Origen’s hermeneutics and soteriology, is entirely lacking in Gregory.

(ii) The equality of the Old and New Testaments

Much earlier scholarship on Origen's exegesis argued that he viewed the Old Testament as a shadow or prefiguring of the New. J. Daniélou, for example, asserts that 'l'Ancien Testament est l'ombre de Nouveau',¹⁶⁸ and H. de Lubac claims that, for Origen, the Old Testament is to the New as the letter is to the spirit.¹⁶⁹ This conception is clearly evident in Gregory's exegetical writings. He states that there is 'an image of truth in the Old Testament [*in Veteri Testamento imago veritatis*], but truth itself [*ipsa veritas*] is not discerned',¹⁷⁰ and, even more clearly, that the Spirit 'spoke typologically [*typice*] in the law and plainly [*manifeste*] in the apostles'.¹⁷¹

K. Torjesen has, however, recently demonstrated that Origen's view of the relationship between the two Testaments is much more complex and nuanced.¹⁷² Indeed, the ontological difference evident in Gregory is contrasted with a much more equal vision in Origen. The first hint of this equality comes in the *De Principiis* itself, in which he makes no distinction between the books of the law, the prophets, the gospels, the epistles, and the Apocalypse of John – all of which contain meanings that are not easy to discern: the 'accurate interpretation [ἀκριβὴς νοῦς]' of the gospels requires 'grace [χάριτος]' because they are the 'interpretation of Christ [νοῦς Χριστοῦ]'; the Apocalypse contains 'unspeakable mysteries [ἀπορρήτων μυστηρίων]'; and the apostolic epistles are in no way 'plain and easily understood [σαφεῖς καὶ εὐχερώς νοούμεναι]'.¹⁷³

It is, however, in the prologue to the *Commentary on John* that Origen gives a fuller account of the New Testament, which demonstrates a more complex relationship to the Old than can be adequately described with a simple type/anti-type formula. Torjesen emphasizes that Origen does indeed distinguish between the respective functions of the Old Testament [ἡ παλαιά] and the Gospel [εὐαγγέλιον], which comprises the entire New Testament [ἡ καινή], since the latter 'foretells

¹⁶⁸ J. Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948), p. 173.

¹⁶⁹ De Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit*, pp. 166-73.

¹⁷⁰ *Tract.* 4.13 (CCSL 69, p. 30).

¹⁷¹ *Tract.* 11.3-4 (CCSL 69, p. 84).

¹⁷² Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, pp. 43-8.

¹⁷³ *DP* 4.2.3 (Koetschau, pp. 310-11; ET Butterworth, p. 274, modified).

[προκηρύσσουσα]’ what the latter ‘reveals [δεικνύουσα]’.¹⁷⁴ It is, however, the four gospels [τὰ εὐαγγέλια] that are the ‘first-fruit [ἀπαρχὴν]’ of the scriptures – and John is more specifically the ‘first-fruit’ of the gospels – since they reveal the ‘divinity [θεότητα]’ of Christ most clearly.¹⁷⁵ There is not, therefore, a distinct opposition or ontological difference between Old and New Testament, but rather they comprise a spectrum along which the revelation of Christ’s divinity becomes apparent with greater and greater focus. But, unlike Gregory, Origen argues that even in the gospels this revelation is not easily or clearly grasped. There are, rather, two distinct aspects in the Gospel: the ‘sensible gospel [αἰσθητὸν εὐαγγέλιον]’ and the ‘intelligible or spiritual gospel [εὐαγγέλιον νοητοῦ καὶ πνευματικοῦ]’, which he claims relate to one another as do the senses in the Law of Moses.¹⁷⁶

Therefore, unlike Gregory who conceives of the Old Testament as the locus of prophetic revelation of truths made apparent in the New – and, occasionally, as the site of moral exhortation or liturgical proscription – the two Testaments for Origen are both equally *loci* of the pedagogical activity of the Logos, who is both the content of Scripture’s revelation and the active agent who instructs the soul of the reader/hearer.

(iii) The ‘letter’ of Scripture

Although Origen has often been treated as an exegete prone to flights of excessive allegorical fancy, the recent studies of B. Neuschäfer, F.M. Young, and J. Christopher King have done much to rehabilitate our understanding of the extent of Origen’s engagement with the letter of Scripture.¹⁷⁷ In the *De Principiis* alone, Origen uses three different terms to refer to what we would refer to as the ‘literal’, ‘historical’, or ‘plain’ sense of Scripture: σάρεξ, σῶμα, and γράμμα. The content of this sense is simply the ‘obvious interpretation [τὴν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχὴν]’. Although Origen does claim that

¹⁷⁴ *Comm. In Jo.* 1.3.17 (SC 120, p. 66). See Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, pp. 66-9.

¹⁷⁵ *Comm. In Jo.* 1.4.22 (SC 120, p. 70).

¹⁷⁶ *Comm. In Jo.* 1.7.37-43 (SC 120, pp. 80-4).

¹⁷⁷ B. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* 2 vols. (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987); Young, *Biblical Exegesis*; King, *Bridegroom’s Perfect Marriage Song*.

certain biblical texts are *asomatic* – that is, lacking an edificatory fleshly, historical sense – the vast majority of the Scriptures can, he asserts, be of great spiritual benefit to the simpler Christians. The preacher must, therefore, inscribe this ‘bodily’ meaning upon his soul in addition the ‘psychic’ and ‘spiritual’ meanings so that he can properly instruct the whole of the congregation. There is thus real pedagogical value attached to the historical sense, and Origen does not ignore this in his own preaching.¹⁷⁸ Even in the cases of *asomatic* texts, however, the letter of Scripture itself remains of utter importance.¹⁷⁹ Spiritual meanings cannot be discerned if the sequence of the narrative is not properly understood. The clearest example of this is in Origen’s exegesis of the *Song of Songs*, a text that he defines as entirely *asomatic*. Nevertheless, Origen identifies this text as a *drama*, and for each verse he undertakes a lengthy reading of the story (*historia*) itself, before interpreting it in terms of the Church or individual soul. Origen was, moreover, a committed text critic, who was concerned to establish an accurate text of Scripture. His most significant contribution was the ‘Hexapla’, a six-columned comparison of Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament, which included a ‘critical’ version of the LXX, marked with the obelus and asterisk.¹⁸⁰ Origen’s text-critical activities – that is, his concern to establish an accurate text of the Old Testament – and his concern to interpret the letter of the text, including explanation of expressions, figures of speech, or historical events, have all been identified as the collective product of his grounding in the exegetical practices of Graeco-Roman schools, as Neuschäfer and Young have argued.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ See the numerous examples provided in Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, pp. 49-69; and, now, K. Shuve, ‘Entering the Story: Origen’s “Dramatic” Approach to Scripture in the *Homilies on Jeremiah*’ *Studia Patristica* 46 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 235-40.

¹⁷⁹ On the presence of the ‘letter’ even in ‘bodiless’ texts, see King, *Bridegroom’s Perfect Marriage Song*, pp. 51-6. He lucidly demonstrates that Origen’s ‘carefully constructed terminology points to a real distinction between *gramma*—the fixity, structure, and form of the written text—and *sōma*—the fixed and limited understanding found in, and in a sense imputed to, the *gramma* by the materialistic *habitus* that is our mind’s second nature’ (p. 55).

¹⁸⁰ A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 4-28, provides a penetrating and insightful analysis. Origen discusses his use of the obelus (to mark doubtful passages not found in the Hebrew) and asterisk (to mark passages in the Hebrew not found in the Greek) in *Comm in Mt.* 15.14 (GCS 40, p. 388).

¹⁸¹ Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, esp. ch. 3 ‘Die textkritische Methode (ΔΙΟΡΘΩΤΙΚΟΝ)’, pp. 85-138, and ch. 4 ‘Die exegetische Methode (ΕΧΗΓΗΤΙΚΟΝ)’, pp. 139-246; and F.M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 79-96.

Gregory, however, rarely evidences any interest in the letter or historical context of the passage upon which he is preaching. Certainly, he cannot be faulted for his ignorance of text criticism. But he pays little attention to γλωσσηματικόν (explanation of words), ἱστορικόν (explanation of events), τεχνικόν and μετρικόν (rhetoric and metre), which marked Origen's literal exegesis and revealed his indebtedness to Graeco-Roman schools.¹⁸² His very approach to the study of sacred texts – not simply his hermeneutical theory – is fundamentally different from that of Origen.

3. Conclusions

Origen's doctrine of Scripture hinges upon the pedagogy of the Logos in the text – both of the Old and New Testaments. It is hard to dispute the idea that Origen believes there to be three distinct levels of meaning in the text, as Torjesen attempts to do, but this hierarchical model cannot be understood apart from his over-arching concern with the *paideia* of the soul. No such doctrine is evident in Gregory's preaching, and there is nothing in Gregory's hermeneutics that requires the Spanish bishop to have engaged closely with the exegetical writings – not to mention the *De Principiis* – of the Alexandrian master. He is concerned that his hearers believe proper doctrine and cultivate moral virtues, and Scripture is the key instrument in this task. But nowhere does he speak of the activity of the Logos, of hierarchically arranged meanings in Scripture, or of the ascent of the soul to God. Scripture teaches doctrine and exhorts its readers to virtue, but it does not do this in any systematic way. In certain instances it does so literally, in others figuratively. Gregory does not fit comfortably in the rapidly changing West of the late fourth-century, alongside Ambrose, Jerome, and Rufinus, who were deeply influenced by Origen's spiritual exegesis. He rather stands squarely in a more primitive Latin exegetical tradition, and in this chapter we have demonstrated numerous points of contact with earlier Western writers and notes of dissonance with Origen.

¹⁸² As Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, pp. 287-92.

This key distinction has bearing not only on our consideration of Gregory's hermeneutics as a whole, but also specifically on his interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. For Origen, the *Song* cannot be understood apart from this pedagogical understanding of Scripture, for he understands it to be the final step on the ladder of ascent to God – following *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* – at which point the purified soul advances to the contemplation of God.¹⁸³ But since this pedagogical focus is lacking in Gregory's hermeneutics, we must interpret his exegesis of the *Song* in a fundamentally different way. In the following chapter we will have the opportunity to consider in greater detail the relationship between Origen and Gregory's interpretation of the *Song*. The points of convergence will be of as much interest as those of divergence, since the former can help us to identify those elements that Gregory appropriated from earlier commentaries and which were, therefore, well-established in the early Latin tradition.

¹⁸³ *Comm in Cant.* prol.2.

PART THREE

THE *TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO* AND THE EARLY LATIN TRADITION OF SONG EXEGESIS

The assumption that the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* is a defense of Nicene theology is ubiquitous in modern scholarship. Although there has been little attention given specifically to the doctrine of Christ in the *Tractatus*, there is general agreement that its Christology is contingent upon the Nicene creed and in continuity with the theological vision of the *De Fide*.¹ Likewise, scholars assert that the ecclesiology of the text should be understood as a ‘rigorist’ response to the problem of lapsed clergy as it developed in the 360s, according to which any bishop tainted by assent to an ‘Arian’ creed must be deemed impure and cannot be allowed to minister in the Nicene communion.²

E.A. Matter says very little about Gregory’s understanding of Christ, emphasizing instead his rigorist vision of the church, which stems from his radical adherence to the Nicene cause.³ She asserts that in ‘many passages of the *Tractatus*, it is easy to hear echoes of the struggle between the Nicene and Arian Christians’.⁴ N. Henry explicitly affirms Gregory’s commitment to pro-Nicene Christology in the *Tractatus*, but she does acknowledge some discontinuity with the *De Fide*: ‘Although Gregory’s attachment to the Nicene formula clearly appears in the *TE*, the main concern of the treatise is not the nature of Christ but the relation of God to men’.⁵ She does not, however, state precisely where this clear attachment to the creed appears in the text, nor does she say much more about Gregory’s Christology. Henry is rather more preoccupied with elucidating the theme of ‘bridal virginity’ as Gregory develops it in the *Tractatus* – that is, Gregory’s conception of the church as an ‘enclosed body withdrawn from the rest of the world’.⁶ She proposes that the principal sources of this ecclesiological rigorism are his Andalusian upbringing, his ‘deep attachment’ to the

¹ On Gregory’s Christology in general, see Hanson, *Search*, pp. 519-26; Pasqual Torró, *La fe*, pp. 22-34.

² For an overview of Gregory’s ecclesiology, see especially Buckley, *Christ and the Church*; Collantes Lozano, *Estudio sobre su Ecclesiologia*.

³ Matter, *Voice*, pp. 87-9.

⁴ Matter, *Voice*, p. 89.

⁵ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 71.

⁶ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 75.

Nicene creed, and his contact with the schismatic Lucifer of Cagliari.⁷ F.J. Buckley provides the only detailed analysis of the Christology of the *Tractatus*.⁸ Unlike Henry, Buckley does not see any discontinuity with the *De Fide* and indeed he asserts that the *Tractatus* presents a masterful synthesis of the main theological themes of Gregory's earlier works (including the *Tractatus Origenis*). Buckley's language, however, seems to harken more to Chalcedon than Nicaea, in speaking constantly of Gregory's presentation of the 'hypostatic union' in Christ.⁹

In spite of this general consensus that the theology of the *Tractatus* is thoroughly pro-Nicene – whether it is seen to depart in some ways from the concerns of the *De Fide*, as in Henry, or develop them further, as in Buckley – no one has been able to demonstrate where precisely in the text such concerns are found or how the theology, in detail, compares to that of his other works. As we shall see, *pace* Henry, Gregory never invokes any terminology or concepts specific to the Nicene 'formula'; most notably, there is no reference whatsoever to the Son being 'of one substance with the Father [*unius substantiae cum patre*]', which was the whole bugbear of the controversy. Moreover, *pace* Buckley, it is unclear how one can speak of a 'hypostatic union' in the *Tractatus* when Gregory does not in any technical sense develop a doctrine of two natures [*naturae*] in one acting subject [*persona; res*], such as the one Hilary is only feeling his way towards in the ninth book of the *De Trinitate*. Hilary's doctrine of the Incarnation is, moreover, thoroughly contingent upon his assertion of the shared substance of the Father and Son, a theme not treated by Gregory in the *Tractatus* at all.

The desire to see an element of pro-Nicene theology in the *Tractatus* is, of course, understandable. Both ancient sources and modern accounts portray Gregory as a rigorous, even fanatical, defender of Nicene theology, so that scholars are conditioned to look for traces of this in the text. If those traces happen to be faint, as Henry contends, this must simply be a result of the genre of the *Tractatus*. After all, had Gregory not

⁷ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 79.

⁸ Buckley, *Christ and the Church*, pp. 98-119.

⁹ Buckley, *Christ and the Church*, at pp. 98, 99, 100, 101, 103.

already settled the issues pertaining to the Arian-Nicene conflict in the *De Fide*?¹⁰ But the problem cannot be so easily dismissed. The *Tractatus* may not be a constructive work of theology like the *De Fide*, but the defense of an ‘orthodox’ understanding of Christ is central to its very premise: if the church can only mediate salvation to its members because it is the very extension of Christ’s assumed humanity, then it is hard to see how Christology could be considered a peripheral issue. Indeed, Gregory offers a lengthy and dire warning to the church at *Cant.* 2.8-23 to guard the faith from ‘pseudoapostles and circumventors’, and he uses passages from the *Song* to illustrate the doctrine of Christ that believers ought to hold.

In terms of ecclesiology, while it must be admitted that Gregory often draws the boundaries of the church very sharply, there is a strong precedent for this approach to the interpretation of the *Song of Songs* dating back to Cyprian. Indeed, in the specifics, there is little reason to posit a connection to the intransigent attitude that Gregory adopted in the aftermath of Ariminum. One of the key issues debated at the synod of Alexandria (362) was how and whether bishops who had subscribed to the Nike creed could re-establish communion with the Nicene party. As we shall see below, a policy of lenience was adopted, according to which only the anathematization of Arianism and assent to the Nicene creed were required. Gregory is not, however, explicitly concerned with the problem of the lapsed in the *Tractatus*. He is, rather, concerned that the church’s doctrine be preserved inviolate, not changed or influenced by the teaching of heretics, whom he believes are secretly infiltrating the church.

When attempting to discern the historical context in which Gregory composed the *Tractatus*, one must make a proper distinction between the terms ‘anti-Arian’ and ‘pro-Nicene’. The former describes the majority Western opposition, beginning in the early 340s, to the subordinationist theology of the Eusebians (disseminated in the West by Ursacius and Valens), whereas the latter does not become a meaningful descriptor in the West until the mid-350s, when the Nicene creed began to be invoked as the standard of orthodoxy. Although the two do become synonymous, there is a period of some

¹⁰ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, pp. 70-1: ‘The aim of the *TE* is not to deal with christological problems. Gregory had done so in previous works like the *De Fide* in which he studied the function of the double nature of Christ and established the fullness of divinity of Christ’.

fifteen years when Latin Christians could express serious concern about the Christological error and political influence of the ‘Arians’ without making any recourse to the Nicene creed itself. The lack of Nicene vocabulary, the generally hazy understanding of his opponents’ Christology, and the heavy reliance upon Tertullian and Novatian all suggest that the *Tractatus* dates to precisely this period. Moreover, the increased concern regarding heretical influence that is evident in the longer recension suggests an ever-worsening situation for Gregory and his allies. This fits well the steady escalation of conflict in the West from Serdica to Ariminum. The revised chronology of Gregory’s episcopate that I propose in Appendix Two certainly allows for this earlier date for the *Tractatus*. I shall undertake the task of substantiating these admittedly radical claims through a close analysis of the Christology and ecclesiology against the backdrop of the ‘Arian’ controversy in the West.

Despite, however, the clear anti-‘Arian’ concerns in the work, the *Tractatus* cannot be reduced to mere polemic. We shall see that focusing only on the categories of ‘heresy’ or ‘asceticism’ gives us far too limited a perspective to appreciate Gregory’s task. His interpretation of the *Song of Songs* is an act of communal self-definition; he seeks to give an account of the origins of the Christian church and its relationship to the Incarnate Christ, to explain its ongoing reason for existence in the world, and to inscribe firmly its boundaries against competing ideologies. In using the *Song* as a tool of self-definition, he takes up a project with roots in Latin exegesis that dates back to the rebaptism epistles of Cyprian. The *Tractatus de Epithalamio* thus does not reflect the paradigm shift that both Matter and Henry impute to it, but rather is firmly rooted in the earlier interpretive tradition and can serve as a key source in helping us to reconstruct it.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CHRISTOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY

The prologue of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* makes it immediately evident that the doctrines of Christ and the church – and the close relationship of one to the other – are the central concerns of the work. From the earliest commentaries and homilies on the *Song of Songs*, the prologue played a vital role. The *Song*, which lacks any explicit reference to God, had to be properly framed before it could begin to be interpreted. Hippolytus begins his *sermo*: ‘Solomon had wisdom, but he was not wisdom itself; he discovered [*invenit*] grace from God, but he was not grace itself; he was the son of David, but he was not Christ himself’.¹ He sets the *Song of Songs* within the context of the three books of Solomon – *Proverbs* reveals the Father, *Ecclesiastes* the Son, and the *Song of Songs* the Holy Spirit.² The prologue to Origen’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is a lengthy and magisterial philosophical treatment of love and desire, which he identifies as the subject matter of the poem.³ He, too, situates it within the Solomonic corpus, although the three books are no longer identified with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as they were in Hippolytus, but rather with the three *generales disciplinae*, which lead the soul to the knowledge and contemplation of God.⁴ The prologue to the first of his *Homilies on the Song of Songs* is vastly shorter, but still substantial given the time constraints of oral discourse. Origen identifies the genre of the Song (*fabula pariter et epithalamio*), its four *personae* (*sponsa, sponsus, adolescentulae, sodalium greges*), and the way in which his hearers ought to engage with the text (*festina intelligere illud et cum sponsa dicere ea, quae sponsa dicit*). He maintains, moreover, the notion of the

¹ *De Cantico* 1.1 (CSCO 264, p. 23). Translations are from the Latin translation of G. Garitte.

² *De Cantico* 1.5-6, 16 (CSCO 264, p. 23-25).

³ *Comm. In Cant.* prol.1.8 (SC 375, p. 86): *Igitur necessarium mihi videtur, antequam ad ea quae in hoc libello scripta sunt discutienda veniamus, de amore prius ipso, qui est scripturae huius causa praecipua, pauca disserere.*

⁴ *Comm. In Cant.* prol.3 (SC 375, pp. 128-43).

Song as the pinnacle of the soul's ascent, although by relating the *Song of Songs* to other biblical songs, which must first be sung in sequence.⁵

Gregory's prologue is, by contrast, considerably abbreviated, which begins:

You have heard the wedding song [*epithalamium carmen*], beloved brothers, which the Holy Spirit announced through the prophet Solomon in the voice [*ex voce*] of the bride and bridegroom – that is, of Christ and the Church – for the allegorical singing of the heavenly nuptials, when the bridegroom-Christ and bride-soul [*Christus sponsus et anima sponsa*] pledged to one another in turn chaste union and *were made two in one flesh* (Eph 5:31) – that is, God and man [*deus et homo*].⁶

He identifies the genre as an *epithalamium carmen*, and he asserts that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, penned by Solomon, and enacted through the characters [*ex voce*] of bride and bridegroom. Notable is the lack of any interest in the maidens or companions – Gregory is concerned rather with the two protagonists and what they figurally represent. His identification of the bridegroom as Christ and the bride as the church lies firmly within the early Christian interpretive tradition – both Greek and Latin.⁷ The nuptial analogy to describe the relationship of Christ and the Church has roots in Eph 5:21-32, was given theological weight by Irenaeus, and served as the foundation of the ecclesiological exegesis of the Song.⁸

The passage, however, becomes more complex when Gregory speaks of the 'heavenly nuptials' of *Christus sponsus et anima sponsa*, introducing an identification of the bride as 'soul'. This could suggest reliance upon the threefold hermeneutic of Origen, who proposed two distinct referents for the bride – the church and the individual human soul – and he interpreted each verse of the Song in relation to both.⁹ The

⁵ *Hom. In Cant.* 1.1 (SC 37, pp. 58-63).

⁶ *Cant.* 1.1 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 165): *Audistis epithalamium carmen, dilectissimi fratres, quod spiritus sanctus per vatem integrum Salomonem ex voce sponsi et sponsae, id est Christi et Ecclesiae, pro caelestium nuptiarum allegorica decantatione praedixit, quando Christus sponsus et anima sponsa oppigneraverunt sibi invicem castam coniugii voluntatem et facti sunt duo in carne una, id est deus et homo*

⁷ Hippolytus, *De Cantico* 2.2 (CSCO 264, p. 26); Origen, *Hom. In Cant.* 1.1 (SC 37, p. 61) and *Comm. In Cant.* 1.1.2 (SC 375, p. 176); Cyprian, *De dom. or.* 31 (CCL 3A, p. 109), *ep.* 69.2.1 (CCL 3C, pp. 471-2), and *De unit.* 4 (TR) (CCSL 3, p. 252). See further Part One of this dissertation.

⁸ See K. Shuve, 'Irenaeus' Contribution to Early Christian Interpretation of the Song of Songs', in *Irenaeus and His Traditions* (ed. P. Foster and S. Parvis; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011 [forthcoming]).

⁹ Origen's *Commentary* follows a regular pattern. Each verse is first interpreted according to its *historia* – the sequence of events – then an interpretation is given *de ecclesia* and finally there is the interpretation *de anima*: *Haec ergo erit totius libelli species, et secundum hanc pro viribus historica a nobis aptabitur expositio. Spiritualis vero intelligentia, secundum hoc nihilominus quod in praefatione signavimus, vel de*

‘psychological’ interpretation of the poem, which flowered in the medieval period, was the legacy of Origen, as E.A. Matter asserts: ‘The association of the Song of Songs with the love between God and the individual soul is present in the Christian tradition from the beginning; as we have seen, it is present in Origen, and remains a secondary possibility for the text throughout the long tradition of ecclesiological exegesis’.¹⁰ Gregory could well serve as a link in this chain, representing the first deviation from a thoroughly ecclesiological Latin exegetical tradition.

He does not, however, relate the *anima sponsa* to the individual soul’s ascent to God, as does Origen, but rather to the Incarnation of Christ, which is the union of *deus et homo*. *Anima* thus seems to be a metonymy for *homo* – the whole of what was assumed in the Incarnation. This is supported by Gregory’s later claim that Christ ‘took up [*accipere*]’ the ‘flesh and soul of man [*carnem animamque hominis*]’.¹¹ One might nonetheless still propose that Gregory has transposed Origen’s ‘psychological’ interpretation into a ‘Christological’ key. Gregory’s Christological reading, however, does not occur on a separate interpretive level, and we should not presume that Gregory will interpret the Song in any systematic way *de ecclesia* and *de Christo*.¹² He introduces the Christological statement – *deus et homo* – with a citation of *Eph* 5:31 (‘[*they*] were made two in one flesh’), which Paul explicitly relates to the union of the Christ and the Church. Gregory treats the enfleshment of the Word in the Incarnation and the embodiment of Christ in the Church as conceptually inseparable. We demonstrated in the fourth chapter that Gregory frequently employs a ‘primary intertext’ in his exegesis – that is, another biblical passage that serves as the interpretive lens through which the *lectio* under consideration is viewed. The basis for this intimate connection between Christ and the church, upon which the whole *Tractatus* is founded,

ecclesia ad Christum sub sponsae vel sponsi vel de animae cum Verbo Dei coniunctione dirigitur. Dively Lauro, *Soul and Spirit*, pp. 195-237, has proposed that this scheme is rooted in Origen’s three senses of Scripture, where the ‘ecclesiological’ is identified with the ‘mystical’ level and the ‘psychological’ with the ‘moral’.

¹⁰ Matter, *Voice*, p. 123. Matter ignores Hippolytus entirely, who knows only an ecclesiological interpretation, and she treats Origen as the head of the tradition.

¹¹ *Cant.* 1.6 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 169).

¹² For Gregory’s habit of discerning multiple meanings without moving from one interpretive level to another as does Origen (e.g., from the ‘moral’ to ‘mystical’), see the lengthy hermeneutical analysis in Chapter Four.

is *Eph* 1:22-3, which he always references in the same modified form: ‘The church as the apostle defined it is the flesh [*caro*] of Christ’.¹³ An ecclesiological interpretation thus entails a Christological one, and there can be no clean division between the two.

Having identified the bride and bridegroom as Christ and the Church, Gregory offers several scriptural texts (*Hos* 2:19-20; *John* 3:29) that refer either to God or Christ as a bridegroom as means of supporting this claim. This is, to my knowledge, the only example of a prologue to a *Song* commentary that invokes other biblical nuptial texts as a means of contextualizing the nuptial imagery in the Song. He also invokes the *praetitulo* – *Cantica Canticorum* – as further evidence of the subject matter of the poem: ‘For thus it is called *Song of Songs* because it is above all other songs, which Moses and Mary sang in *Exodus* (15:3-21) and *Isaiah* (26:9-20) and *Habakuk* (3:2-19) and others sung’.¹⁴ This etymology of the *praetitus* is found first in Origen, who provides a much more exhaustive list of biblical songs and conceptualizes the singing of them as a progressive ascent to God, which culminates with the Song of Songs.¹⁵ Gregory does not order the biblical songs in an ascending fashion, but he asserts the superiority of the *Song of Songs* ‘since the voice of God and the church [*dei et Ecclesiae vox*] is heard singing, because divine and human [*divina et humana*] are joined to one another in turn’.¹⁶ Tertullian, in the *Adversus Praxean*, had named *divina et humana* as the two *substantiae* which were present in Jesus Christ.¹⁷ Gregory’s phraseology thus has clear Christological overtones, but he nonetheless emphasizes that it is the ‘voice of God and the church’ that is heard. Both ecclesiology and Christology are bound together in their unifying of *divina et humana*, and for Gregory it is the Song, of all Scripture, which most clearly expresses this union.

¹³ It is the most cited text in the *Tractatus*, occurring nine times overall, and at least once in each book except for the second book (*Cant.*, 1.7, 20, 31; 3.7, 11, 29; 4.11-12; 5.12). See also *Tract* 5.26 (CCSL 69, p. 40): *quae Christi caro est*; 9.10 (p. 72): *carnem Christi indicat, quam ecclesiam esse apostolus definivit*; 12.28 (p. 96): *quod ecclesiae labia, quae caro est*.

¹⁴ *Cant.* 1.2 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 167): *Sic enim pronuntiatur Cantica canticorum, eo quod super omnia cantica, quae aut Moyses aut Maria in Exodo aut Esayas aut Abacuc et ceteri cecinerunt*.

¹⁵ Origen, *Comm. In Cant.* prol.4.1-15 (SC 375, pp. 146-56); *Hom. In Cant.* 1.1 (SC 37, pp. 59-61).

¹⁶ *Cant.* 1.2 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 167): *Hic autem quia dei et Ecclesiae vox psallentis auditur, propter quod divina et humana sibi invicem copulantur*.

¹⁷ *Prax.* 29.2 (FC 34, p. 246): *Quaquam cum duae substantiae censeantur in Christo Iesu, divina et humana, constet autem immortalem esse divinam, cum mortalem quae humana sit*.

The complex task remains, however, to determine how precisely Gregory develops his doctrines of Christ and the church in the *Tractatus* and what these reveal about the historical and theological context in which he is writing. I have already indicated that I disagree with the scholarly consensus that Gregory composed and revised the *Tractatus* near the end of the fourth century, when he was embittered both about the lapse of roughly four hundred bishops at Ariminum and the subsequent decision to allow the offenders to retain their episcopal chairs. To demonstrate the problems with this hypothesis, however, and to suggest a far more likely context for composition, we must first occupy ourselves with the task of constructing a brief narrative of the unfolding of the ‘Arian’ controversy in the West, from 325-62.

I. THE ‘ARIAN’ CONTROVERSY IN THE WEST, 325-362

1. Origins: Nicaea to Serdica (325-343)

The ‘Arian’ controversy remained a problem largely, although not entirely, confined to the Eastern half of the Empire and the bordering Greek-speaking Western provinces until the 350s.¹⁸ At Nicaea itself, only five Western bishops attended – Ossius of Cordoba, Caecilianus of Carthage, Nicasius of Gaul, Marcus of Calabria, and Domnus of Pannonia – as well as two Roman presbyters, Vito and Vincentius, on behalf of the ailing Sylvester.¹⁹ This is largely unsurprising. S. Parvis has recently demonstrated that a network of support for Arius existed in a concentrated cluster in the civil diocese of Oriens and the province of Libya, whereas Alexander drew rather broader support across Egypt, Pontus, Asia Minor, and Thrace.²⁰ Indeed, she contends that ‘it is possible that

¹⁸ The use of the terms ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ to denote two ‘halves’ of the Empire in the fourth century is, admittedly, imprecise, nor do they signify a clean division between ‘Greek’ and ‘Latin’ speakers. The civil diocese of Dacia was under the control of Licinius until 324, and bishops from those provinces should naturally be considered ‘Easterners’ at Nicaea. But since Dacia passed to the jurisdiction of Constans in 337, Dacian bishops were part of the ‘Western’ party at Serdica in 343.

¹⁹ Hanson, *Search*, p. 156. The names, sees, and provinces are derived from the list reported by codex *t* (Vat. 1319), *EOMIA* i.1.2, pp. 99-101.

²⁰ S. Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy, 325-45* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), pp. 39-68. She argues for the usefulness of Philostorgius (cf. *HE* 2.14) in assembling a list of

every bishop at Nicaea had already committed himself to one side or another, and that they were invited for that very reason'.²¹ The earliest phase of the controversy thus consisted of the drawing up and shifting of alliances between bishops who were entirely within the jurisdiction of Licinius, and the debate pertained to the use of technical Greek terms (*hypostasis*, *physis*, *ousia*, etc.) that would have been of little interest to Latin theologians with a rather clearer (if entirely less sophisticated) theological inheritance from Tertullian.

This is not to say, however, that the West was entirely untouched. It must be noted that those exiled either at Nicaea or in its immediate aftermath were sent to the West. Although both Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea, allies of Arius, had subscribed to the creed at Nicaea, within three months of the council Constantine deposed them and sent them to Gaul, 'as far away as possible', likely to Trier.²² But there is no evidence that their theology made any imprint in Latin Gallic Christianity. The exile of Arius, however, had a profound impact upon the course of the following decades. According to Philostorgius, he was sent to Illyricum, by which he means either the civil diocese or prefecture.²³ Parvis has suggested Serdica, Naissus, or Sirmium as possible cities, reasoning that the closest eye could be kept on him in one of the imperial capitals.²⁴ We cannot trace Arius' movements or correspondence during his exile, but

sympathizers of Arius before Nicaea, and using his account as a base, supplemented by Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*, she lists 26 named supporters of Arius. The *provinciae* represented are: Libya (6), Thebaid (1), Palestine (3), Phoenicia (2), Syria (1), Cilicia (4), Cappadocia (1), Diospontus (1), Pontus Polemoniacus (1), Armenia (2), Asia (1), and Bithynia (3). The named supporters of Alexander are rather less numerous – there are only six bishops and seven in all – but their sees were prestigious and included, most notably, Antioch (Philogonius; Eustathius) and Jerusalem (Macarius). There survives, however, record of a tome that Alexander sent around to collect signatures in support of his theology, which was signed by approximately two hundred bishops 'from all Egypt and the Thebaid and Libya and the Pentapolis and the places beyond, and also of those of Palestine and Arabia and Achaia and Thrace and Hellespontus and Asia and Caria and Lycia and Lydia and Phrygia and Pamphilia and Galatia and Pisidia and Pontus and Polemoniacus and Cappadocia and Armenia' (*Urk.* 15.5; ET Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 67).

²¹ Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 67.

²² Constantine, *Letter to the Church of Nicomedia* (*Urk.* 27.16 [Opitz, p. 62.8]). Socrates mistakenly asserts that Eusebius and Theognis refused to subscribe to the creed and were exiled along with Arius (*HE* 1.8). They did, however, refuse to anathematize Arius. See further, Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 17.

²³ Philostorgius, *HE* 1.9. On his use of 'Illyricum', see Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 135.

²⁴ Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 135.

ten years later, at the council of Tyre/Jerusalem (335),²⁵ which was convened to try the case of Athanasius, two bishops from the Illyrican prefecture – Valens of Mursa (Moesia) and Ursacius of Singidunum (Pannonia Secunda) – were present as part of the Eusebian party,²⁶ and indeed they were selected to be on the Mareotis commission along with Theodore of Heraclea, Maris of Chalcedon, Theognis of Nicaea, and Macedonius of Mopsuestia.²⁷ To explain their involvement at the synod and alliance with the Eusebians, we must presume that they fell under the influence of Arius during his time in exile – an assertion that Athanasius explicitly makes.²⁸ Their influence on the course of events in the West can first be discerned in the 340s.

The conflict in the ensuing decades remained deeply embedded in the ecclesiastical politics of the East. It was again the exile of an eastern bishop that would draw in the Latin provinces farther west: in 335, following the synod of Tyre/Jerusalem and an appeal at Constantinople, Athanasius was exiled to Trier.²⁹ It was there that Athanasius would befriend Maximinus, bishop of Trier, who was to play an important role in the events leading to Serdica.³⁰ Although he returned to Alexandria to reclaim his see upon the death of Constantine in 337, Athanasius was soon deposed again and this time he fled to Rome in 339, whose new bishop Julius had already demonstrated sympathy towards him.³¹ Marcellus, whose see had been definitively claimed by Basil

²⁵ On the synod of Tyre/Jerusalem, see Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.42-5 and Sozomen, *HE* 2.25-7. For a discussion of the proceedings, see Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 22-3; S. Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 125-7.

²⁶ *VC* 4.43.3 (FC 83, p. 462): ‘the Pannonians and Moesians [sent] the fairest of the young flock of God among them’.

²⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 2.25.19.

²⁸ *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* 7. This seems particularly likely if Arius were exiled to Sirmium, which lies between Mursa and Singidunum. See further, M. Meslin, *Les Ariens d’Occident (335-430)* (Paris, 1967), pp. 71-84.

²⁹ He fled Tyre before a verdict had been reached and was condemned and deposed in absentia. He nearly successfully managed to have Constantine overturn the verdict at Constantinople, but he was later exiled to Gaul on the charge that he threatened to delay the shipment of grain in Alexandria. See Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 23-4.

³⁰ Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 135.

³¹ Julius acted favourably towards Athanasius when confronted with competing delegations of ‘Eusebians’, who wanted Julius to acknowledge Pistus as bishop of Alexandria (*Apologia contra Arianos* 1.20, 22.3), and of Athanasian supporters, who brought a letter subscribed to by bishops from across the diocese of Egypt that claimed Athanasius had never been properly deposed (*Ap c Ar* 1.3-19). Julius sent a letter of reply to the ‘Eusebians’ calling for a synod to be held in Rome to judge the matter – supposedly at the behest of Macarius, Martyrius, and Hesychius (*Ap c Ar* 1.22.3) – which was evidently met with

following his earlier deposition, arrived at Rome three months after Athanasius, presumably having received correspondence from him.³² Rome was to be the first Western city to host a synod related to the ‘Arian’ controversy, but Julius did not call it to dispute Trinitarian doctrine or settle the authority of the Nicene creed, but rather to hear the cases of Athanasius and Marcellus.³³ Not surprisingly, Julius met with resistance from the Eastern bishops, who ultimately sent a letter from the Dedication synod in Antioch denouncing the gathering.³⁴ In the interim between the arrival of the exiles in the autumn 339 and the meeting of the Roman synod in spring 341, Marcellus and Athanasius forged a relationship. It was here that Marcellus wrote his letter to Julius (*apud* Epiphanius, *Panarion* 72.2.1ff) outlining his theology and that the two exiled bishops seem to have conspired to create what S. Parvis has termed ‘the full-blown Arian heresy’.³⁵ The synod, comprised of roughly fifty Italian bishops and no Eastern delegates, finally met in mid-March 341 in the church of the presbyter Vito, who had been one of Sylvester’s representatives at Nicaea.³⁶ It ruled that the evidence against Athanasius and Marcellus was insufficient to warrant their depositions and that the Roman church would not expel them from communion and would treat them as bishops of their respective sees.³⁷ Moreover, as a means of justifying this communion with deposed bishops, Julius points out that the Easterners hold communion with ‘Arian madmen’ who have been condemned by ‘the great council of Nicaea’, which was much

hostility (*Ap c Ar* 1.22.1-4). Competing chronologies are given by Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 36-7; Hanson, *Search*, pp. 266-9; Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 150-7.

³² Suggested by Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 157.

³³ Julius sent a letter with the presbyters Elpidius and Philoxenus to Antioch to persuade an Eastern delegation to come to Rome soon after the arrival of Athanasius (*Ap c Ar* 1.20).

³⁴ The tone was so harsh that Julius kept its contents private until the opening of the synod itself (*Ap c Ar* 1.20.2-3).

³⁵ Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 181: ‘...modelled on the constructs of the old heresiologies, with its diabolical initiative, its roots in previous heresies or philosophies, and its single male heresiarch with his malignant followers, who propagate theological perversions with great vigour, persecute the orthodox, and, most importantly of all, have been clearly condemned by the Church’. She argues her point, convincingly, on the basis that the notion of an Arian heresy first appears in Marcellus’ *Letter to Julius* and *On the Holy Church*, Athanasius’ *Orations Against the Arians* I, and Julius’ letter to the Eastern bishops that was read at the Dedication synod.

³⁶ *Ap c Ar* 1.20.

³⁷ *Ap c Ar* 29 (Athanasius); *Ap c Ar* 32 (Marcellus). S. Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 195-8, perceptively argues that the Roman synod was not attempting to exert its influence on the affairs of the East, but rather to resolve the relevant local question as to whether the Roman church ought to remain in communion with Athanasius and Marcellus.

larger and more universal than any body that had acted against either Athanasius or Marcellus. The synod at Rome set the pro-Athanasian agenda that would characterize much of the West in the ensuing decades; moreover, the presence of the two at Rome for an extended period of time and their influence upon Julius cannot but have begun to affect the shape of Latin theology.

But there were consequences beyond Italy. A report of the synod was sent to Constans, who denounced the Dedication synod and pressed his brother to call an ecumenical council.³⁸ Constantius initially responded by sending a delegation of four bishops – Narcissus of Neronias, Maris of Chalcedon, Theodorus of Heraclea, and Mark of Arethusa – to Constans in Trier bearing the fourth creed of Antioch, the most conciliatory of the four.³⁹ The outcome was disastrous. Maximinus, Trier’s bishop, was not nearly as diplomatic as Julius and he refused to welcome the delegation,⁴⁰ likely owing to his past ties with Athanasius; the Easterners would not forget this snub. The incident represents a hardening of support for Athanasius and his theology in the West.

Constans did eventually secure an ecumenical synod with the consent of Constantius, which met in Serdica in 343. But, as Hanson rightly notes, it was ‘a debacle rather than a Council’,⁴¹ poised to fail from the beginning. Upon their arrival in Serdica, the Eastern bishops refused to meet with the Western bishops while the latter communicated with condemned heretics. Neither side was willing, even temporarily, to set aside the verdicts of their respective councils, however: Tyre and Constantinople, on the one hand, Rome, on the other. The Eastern bishops drafted a strongly-worded Encyclical, which they sent from Philippopolis, having withdrawn to Constantius’ territory from Serdica under pretense. The Western bishops met on their own and drafted a number of documents, including an encyclical with the so-called ‘Western Creed of Serdica’. The important thing to note about this gathering, however, is that of

³⁸ Cf. *Historia Arianorum* 15.2.

³⁹ *De Synodis* 25.

⁴⁰ *Fragmenta Historica* 1.2.27 (Wickham, p. 36; Feder A IV 1, 27). Wickham, p. xxii, not unjustly describes the fragmentary state of this polemical work as a ‘headache’. I believe his reconstruction of the text gives a better impression of its original form than does Feder’s edition, so I always cite the text according to Wickham’s numbering and make use of his excellent translation. I do, however, provide the reference to Feder so the reader can easily consult the Latin.

⁴¹ Hanson, *Search*, p. 295.

the eighty-nine bishops who signed at least one of the documents, at least half, and perhaps more, were Greek speakers.⁴² All of the predominantly Latin speaking Western provinces represented at Nicaea were again represented at Serdica (the Spains, the Gauls, Italia, Calabria), with the addition of Campania and Tuscia, and in somewhat greater numbers, but they were nonetheless dwarfed by those from the Balkans. Geography, of course, played a role in this; Serdica was nearly at the border with Thrace. But we must also recall that it was in Pannonia and Moesia where Ursacius and Valens, who maintained such close links with the Eusebians, had their sees. The issues under debate were certainly most pressing for the Illyrican bishops. Particularly interesting for our purposes is the uptake in the number of Spanish bishops: Ossius of Cordoba, Annianus of Castolona, Florentius of Emerita, Domitianus of Asturica, Captus of Caesarea Augusta, Praetextatus of Barcelona.⁴³ The sees represented cover nearly the whole of the peninsula, with Cordoba in the south in Baetica; Emerita in the west in Lusitania; Asturica in the north west in Gallaecia; and Barcelona and Caesarea Augusta in the north east in Tarraconensis.

It is likely that the encyclical would have circulated throughout Spain, given that one of its key purposes was to warn Western bishops not to communicate with Theodore, Narcissus, Acacius, Stephen, Ursacius, Valens, Menophantus, and George.⁴⁴ But it is difficult to judge precisely how much attention the controversy merited in Spain, as no additional Spanish bishops subscribed in support of Athanasius.⁴⁵ In any

⁴² Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 224. She notes that based on name alone a number of others could have been either native Greek speakers or fluent in the language. Only thirty confirmed Latin speakers were in attendance.

⁴³ Athanasius provides a list of the signatories of the encyclical at *Ap c Ar.* 1.50, but without listing their sees. Hilary, however, gives a list of the signatories to the synod's letter to Julius at *FH* 1.5.2 (Wickham, pp. 50-2; Feder B II 4), listing the see and province of nearly each subscriber. All six Spanish bishops subscribed to both documents.

⁴⁴ *FH* 1.3.8 (Wickham, p. 47; Feder B II 1, 8). It is unclear, however, to what extent it did so. The *Liber Synodicus*, of doubtful credibility, asserts that Ossius convened a *divinam et sanctam episcoporum sua in civitatae*, at which he briefed the Spanish bishops (likely from Baetica, though perhaps even further afield) on the happenings at Serdica. But even if the story is apocryphal, it is certainly not implausible to think that Ossius did something of the kind. For the text and discussion, see V.C. De cleriq, *Ossius of Cordova* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), pp. 407-8.

⁴⁵ When Athanasius reproduced a copy of the encyclical in the *De Synodis*, he included a list of all those bishops not in attendance at Serdica who subscribed to the *acta*, divided by province; a fairly significant

event, the encyclical⁴⁶ would have provided its readers with some sense of the genesis of the controversy as it had unfolded in the previous five years, beginning with the letter of the ‘Eusebians’ (Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris, Theodore, Diognitus, Ursacius, and Valens) to Julius regarding Athanasius and Marcellus (1.3.2). The focus, however, is upon the events of the Serdican synod itself, cast in a very different light from the Eastern letter. The Eastern bishops are depicted as fleeing not out of piety, but out of shame and fear, for the way they treated Athanasius and Marcellus and brutally tortured their supporters (1.3.3). The encyclical does not overtly implicate Constantius in the violence against the pro-Athanasian alliance, but it does suggest that the Emperor was deceived by false letters (1.3.3). It then proceeds to relate how Athanasius was exonerated from all charges of wrong-doing and Marcellus from the charge of heresy, especially regarding the Word taking its beginning from Mary and the Son’s kingdom having an end (1.3.5-6). After this, the letter turns the charges of heresy and wrong-doing on the Eastern bishops, who have put Arians in senior posts in the church; Theodorus, Narcissus, Stephen, George, Acacius, Menophantus, Ursacius, and Valens are singled out as the leaders (1.3.7). Finally, the Easterners are denigrated as Arians *tout court*; Athanasius, Marcellus, and Asclepas are fully acquitted and treated as bishops; Gregory of Alexandria, Basil of Ancyra, and Quincianus of Gaza are held to be impostors (‘wolves’) not to be communicated with; and the aforementioned ‘leaders’ are condemned and excommunicated for ‘separating the Son and estranging the Word from the Father’ (1.3.8).

The encyclical is light on theology and heavy on politics. The enemies and allies are made clear, as is the heart of the theology of the ‘Arians’, though only briefly: they unacceptably separate the Son from the Father. The Western bishops also drafted a profession of faith that seems originally to have formed the conclusion of the encyclical, but there are problems with this document. It is preserved only in Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History* (Greek version) and the Verona Codex (Latin version) and is not included by either Athanasius or Hilary. Athanasius, some years later, was at pains to

number from Gaul (34) and Africa (36) are listed along with a handful from Italy (15), but he provides the names of no additional subscribers from Spain.

⁴⁶ *FH* 1.3.1-8 (Wickham, pp. 41-7; Feder B II 1, 1-8)

denounce the ‘memorandum [πιττάκιον]’ that was ‘drawn up as in the synod at Serdica [ὡς ἐν τῇ κατὰ σαρδικὴν συνόδῳ συνταχθέν]’ as a spurious document put together by some, which was never ratified by the bishops.⁴⁷ Hanson thinks Athanasius is here lying and that the synod, presumably under the direction of Ossius and Protogenes, composed and endorsed (and thus, presumably, circulated) the profession, whereas Barnes takes the opposite view, asserting that although the bishops did draft the profession as the original conclusion to the encyclical, they soon discarded it as an embarrassment.⁴⁸ Parvis’ *via media* provides a more convincing account of the drafting of the creed in the synod. She argues that it is a coherent, yet uncompromising, account of Marcellan theology, which was drafted by Marcellus and supported by Ossius and Protogenes but not Athanasius, who must have objected both on the grounds that it circumscribed too narrowly the bounds of orthodoxy and, more seriously, undermined the authority of Nicaea. Her suggestion that the synod itself left the authority of the profession ambiguous, perhaps to be ruled upon by Julius, is compelling, but she leaves unanswered the question of the extent of its circulation, which is our more pressing concern at present.⁴⁹

Notably, the so-called Western creed is a direct repudiation of the fourth creed of Antioch and the additional anathemas included by the Eastern delegation at Serdica.⁵⁰ Any attempt at compromise was thoroughly eliminated. The creed begins by anathematizing those ‘who say that Christ is God, but not true God [ὅτι θεός ἐστιν δηλονότι ὁ Χριστός, ἀλλὰ μὴν ἀληθινὸς θεὸς οὐκ ἐστιν]’; Christ is ‘the Son, but not the true Son [ὅτι υἱός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ ἀληθινὸς υἱὸς οὐκ ἐστιν]’; and that He is ‘begotten’, but nonetheless has a beginning and end (hence, not eternally begotten) [ὅτι γεννητός ἐστιν ἅμα καὶ γενητός]. Ursacius and Valens are singled out as ‘two vipers born from the Arian asp [ἀπὸ τῆς ἀσπίδος τῆς Ἀρειανῆς ἐγεννήθησαν]’, who teach

⁴⁷ *Tomos ad Antiochenos* 5 (PG 26:800C).

⁴⁸ Hanson, *Search*, p. 304; Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 236-45. Julius, indeed, seems to have been concerned with the possibility that the so-called Western creed would be the undoing of Nicaea, a fear which Ossius and Protogenes are at pains to allay in a fragment of their letter to Julius.

⁵⁰ This could easily have been procured by Arius of Palestine and Asterius of Arabia who ‘crossed the floor’, so to speak, from the Eastern to the Western synod (cf. Hilary, *FH* 1.3.7 [Wickham, p. 46; Feder B II 1, 7]; Athanasius, *Ap c Ar.* 48).

that ‘the *logos* and the Spirit were crucified and sacrificed, died and were raised [ὅτι ὁ λόγος καὶ ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐσταυρώθη καὶ ἐσφάγη καὶ ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη]’. The Word thus does not share in the substance of the impassible Father, meaning that Christ cannot truly be God; nor, however, can he be human – at least as far as the Latin tradition understood the humanity of Christ – since the Word takes the place of the soul. Most divisively, the creed anathematizes any who hold to three hypostases, which would have branded any Origenist an Arian.⁵¹

There is yet another document drafted at the synod that is highly significant for our narrative – the letter to Julius.⁵² The letter is quite brief, as its authors (Ossius and Protegenes) note that the other written documents and the ‘living voices [*vivae voces*]’ of the letter carriers – the presbyters Arcydamus and Philoxenus, and the deacon Leo – surely provide more than sufficient information about the proceedings of the synod (1.4.2). It was written to request that Julius ensure bishops in Sicily, Sardinia, and Italy are made aware of the proceedings of Serdica (1.4.5). Julius himself refused to come to the synod apparently out of fear that ‘schismatic wolves [*lupi schismatici*]’ might gain control of the Roman church in his absence (1.4.1). His fear seems to have been well founded. The ‘wolves’ are not specifically named, but they are almost certainly the ‘irreligious and immature young men Valens and Ursacius [*de impiis et de imperitis adulescentibus Ursacio et Valente*]’ and their associates, later targeted in the letter (1.4.4). The letter accuses both of ‘spreading the deadly seeds of counterfeit doctrine [*adulterinae doctrinae letalia semina spargere*]’, indicating that the two have begun to attract a following in the Pannoniae and perhaps even farther west. Valens, it seems, had made an attempt to claim the episcopal chair of Aquileia, which lies on the eastern edge of Italia Annonaria, resulting in the death of Viator, likely the city’s bishop (1.4.4). He was ultimately unsuccessful in his ‘rebellion [*seditionem*]’, however, as Fortunatianus is attested as bishop of Aquileia at Serdica.

The documents of the Western synod of Serdica are decisively important in our narrative, for it is the only pan-Western synod that met prior to 359 and it is the last

⁵¹ Theodoret, *HE* 2.8.37 (SC 501, p. 368). For a detailed comparison of the Western creed with the Eastern anathemas, see Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 240-2.

⁵² *FH* 1.4.1-5 (Wickham, pp. 47-52; Feder B II 2,1-5).

event in the controversy, as far as we can discern from the extant evidence, in which Spanish bishops played a direct role prior to the mid 350s. The encyclical would have brought a number of Latin bishops up to speed on developments in the East, who might otherwise have been largely ignorant of the events and key players. What would have become clear from the encyclical as Athanasius and Hilary preserve it is that a worryingly large number of influential Eastern bishops were in some sense denying the divinity of Christ – that they were denying both his true sonship and his true divinity. If the so-called Western creed did circulate in Spain, it is unclear how many of its bishops would have grasped the key theological issues at play, given that it was responding, though not explicitly, to the fourth creed of Antioch. But although the nuances of the debate would have been largely foreign to the Spanish context, its implications were not: undermining the divinity of Christ left the hope of salvation dashed upon the rocks. The letter to Julius would not have circulated, but the information it contains about the behaviour of Ursacius and Valens must have been much discussed at the synod and cannot fail to have been disseminated by word of mouth once bishops returned home to their sees, especially in Spain which had such wide representation.

The encyclical of the Eastern synod also gives us a sense of the extent to which the controversy was beginning to penetrate the West. The letter appears to have been dispatched to Donatus in Carthage, who was to circulate it among sympathetic bishops in the West. The bishops who are specifically named in addition to Donatus are Desiderius of Campania, Fortunatus of Campania (Neapolis), Euthicius of Campania, Maximus of Dalmatia (Salona), the clergy of Ariminum, and one Sinferon, whose see is not specified.⁵³ There was a substantial cluster of support for the Eastern bishops in Italy, with three Campanian bishops and the clergy of Ariminum. Solona and Carthage, moreover, were strategically important cities – both were seaports and capitals of their respective provinces. It is little wonder Julius felt vulnerable. We cannot say why all the named bishops came to side with the Easterners. Donatus must have sided with them to spite Rome, and two further bishops (Euthicius and Sinferon) have Greek names and may have resided earlier in the East. Whatever their reasons, under the leadership of

⁵³ *FH* 1.2.praef (Wickham, p. 20; Feder A IV).

Ursacius and Valens, they formed a growing minority of resistance to the generally pro-Athanasian line in the West.

One further point must be made concerning the role of Constantius. The Western delegation at Serdica seems to have gone out of its way to avoid the appearance of collusion with the imperial authorities: their bishops lodged throughout the city and celebrated the eucharist in the Serdican churches, whereas the Easterners lodged in the imperial palace and arrived at the synod accompanied by the *comes* Musonianus and the *castrensis* Hesychius.⁵⁴ Athanasius makes a great show in the *Historia Arianorum* that the Westerners had only ‘Ossius for their Father’ but that those from the East brought imperial advocates;⁵⁵ this bit of polemic – namely, that the Eastern heretics are in bed with the imperial authorities – must have been informally circulated around the churches of the West.

2. Escalation, Part One: The Photinian Problem and the Reconciliation of Ursacius and Valens (344-351)

Perhaps the most significant feature of the following years is the emergence of a figure who occupied that small patch of theological ground which both sides were happy to condemn: Photinus of Sirmium. Photinus was a deacon of Marcellus and was elected bishop of Sirmium, the capital of Pannonia near to the border of Moesia. He was first condemned (under the parodic name ‘Scotinus’) along with Marcellus at a synod in Antioch in 344 for teaching that Christ took his beginning at the Incarnation and his kingdom will come to an end.⁵⁶ Parvis has suggested that Ursacius and Valens must have been responsible for Photinus’ condemnation at Antioch, since Sirmium lay directly between Mursa and Singidunum.⁵⁷ Their proximity to his see would have given them first-hand knowledge of his teaching, and the danger of having an enemy

⁵⁴ Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* 15.3; see also. Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 71-2, and Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 234.

⁵⁵ *Hist. Ar.* 15.3.

⁵⁶ Athanasius, *Syn.* 26.5.

⁵⁷ Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 248.

occupying the capital must have been worrying. Moreover, the accession of Photinus would have given Ursacius and Valens the opportunity to tar the Western bishops as Marcellan, much as Athanasius had successfully depicted the Easterners as Arian.

This synod produced the ‘Creed of Long Lines’, another attempt at conciliating Western bishops. It was in essence the fourth Creed of Antioch with the original anathemas and those from Serdica as well as seven explanatory paragraphs, which repudiated the extremes of the theology of Arius; avoided employing the contentious terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*; and confessed the Son to be ‘like in all things to the Father’ – the first appearance of what would come to be an important phrase. The creed was taken to a gathering of Western bishops at Milan in 345 by Macedonius, Eudoxius, Martyrius, and Demophilus in the hope that it would meet with approval.⁵⁸

The details of the synod are elusive, but several facts are clear: the Western bishops had met to discuss the case of Photinus, whom they condemned and (unsuccessfully) deposed.⁵⁹ It is interesting that both Eastern and Western synods condemned Photinus within months of one another, and we may presume that the events were not unrelated. Despite the endorsement of Marcellus’ theology at Serdica – evidenced both in the exoneration of his ‘book’ and in the prominent role he played in drafting the so-called ‘Western creed’ – he was quickly becoming a liability to any attempt at reconciliation with the Easterners, especially as he took steps towards the more radical two-hypostasis doctrine of his former pupil.⁶⁰ It was inevitable that the Western bishops would have to condemn Photinus, and Athanasius approached Marcellus beforehand to strike a deal that would allow him to slip into the shadows without facing condemnation or censure; Marcellus consented, and, according to Hilary, no synod ‘was ever thereafter got together against Marcellus’.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Athanasius, *Syn.* 26.

⁵⁹ Hilary, *FH* 1.5.4 (Wickham, p. 54; Feder B II 5, 4).

⁶⁰ *FH* 1.8.1 (Wickham, p. 57; Feder II 9, 1).

⁶¹ For Hilary’s account of the split between Athanasius and Marcellus, see Hilary, *FH* 1.8.1-3 (Wickham, pp. 56-8; Feder B II 9, 1-3). Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 248-9 gives the most sympathetic reading of the events, highlighting (correctly, in my view) the active role that Marcellus himself took in the affair. T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 92 also notes that Marcellus made the conscious decision not to push the matter.

The synod of Milan is also notable because it was there that Ursacius and Valens made their first attempt to enter into communion with Julius and the pro-Athanasian bishops. In a letter composed some two years later to Julius, they make mention of a ‘document’ presented at Milan, in which they anathematized Arius, his followers, and the assertions ‘there was a time when the Son did not exist [*erat tempus, quando non erat filius*]’ and the ‘Son is from nothing [*ex nihilo filium*]’.⁶² There were very compelling political reasons for reconciliation, as Barnes notes.⁶³ They had very recently and very strongly been condemned on both theological and political grounds by a large group of Western bishops who enjoyed the backing of Constans, leaving them in a very delicate position.⁶⁴

The gathering of Western bishops at Milan was thus able to agree with the Easterners on the condemnation of Photinus (although not Marcellus), but they seem not to have accepted the ‘Creed of Long Lines’. Instead, they demanded that the Eastern bishops anathematize Arius, which the four aforementioned ones refused to do and stormed out of the synod.⁶⁵

There was yet another council held at Rome two years later and the same issues – the condemnation of Photinus and the reconciliation of Ursacius and Valens – were again brought forward for consideration. According to Hilary, bishops attended the synod from ‘a large number of provinces’, although it is not specified which ones.⁶⁶ It is plausible to assume that several Spanish bishops, including perhaps Ossius himself, were present. It seems that in spite of the turn of Ursacius and Valens, the ‘Arian’ controversy was becoming an increasingly prominent force in the West and the synod was called to stem the tide. Hilary asserts that it had ‘been necessary hitherto for a number of bishops responsible for false judgments against Athanasius or communion with the Arian heresy to be cut off from the Church’.⁶⁷ Italy may well have been a key

⁶² Hilary, *FH* 1.6 (Wickham, p. 56; Feder II B 6).

⁶³ T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 88.

⁶⁴ Serdica was the first synod to condemn Ursacius and Valens.

⁶⁵ According to a letter of Liberius to Constantius in 353 (*FH* 2.3.4; Wickham, p. 73; *CaP* A VII 4).

⁶⁶ *FH* 1.5.4 (Wickham, p. 54; Feder II B 5,4).

⁶⁷ *FH* 1.5.4 (Wickham, p. 54; Feder II B 5,4).

battleground, as the Eusebians had a cluster of sympathizers in Campania, as we saw above.

The Roman synod again condemned Photinus and reinstated Ursacius and Valens to communion, upon the approval of Julius. They together composed a letter at Rome to Julius, subscribed in Valens' own hand, which repudiates their prior spreading of false knowledge about Athanasius, embraces communion with him, and anathematizes the Arians and their doctrines.⁶⁸ We do not know for how long Ursacius and Valens remained in communion with the pro-Athanasian alliance and whether they secretly maintained contact with their former Eusebian allies. But it is likely that upon the death of Constans in 350 they began making plans to rejoin openly their former allies.

We are not told on what grounds Photinus was condemned at the two Italian synods, but the Western bishops must have had to tread lightly because of the close relationship between Photinus and Marcellus. Antioch is the last time that Photinus will be condemned for teaching that Christ's kingdom will have an end, but his assertion that the Son has his beginning in the Incarnation will remain trenchant. A number of the anathemas of the Sirmian Creed (351) are directed against this assertion, either explicitly or implicitly (V, XV, XVI, XVII, XXVII),⁶⁹ and Epiphanius begins his lengthy report by asserting, 'He claims that Christ did not exist from the beginning, but dates from Mary's time – after the Holy Spirit came upon her, he says, and he was conceived of the Holy Spirit'.⁷⁰ The Sirmian anathemas also make explicit the charge of modalism, according to which the 'Ingenerate' appeared in the theophanies and was later made Incarnate (IV, VII, X, XV-XVII, XIX, XX). Photinus seems, moreover, to have made a distinction between 'Word' and 'Son', the former existing with God in the beginning as an internal utterance (from the same *hypostasis* and *prosopon* [cf. anathema XIX]), but the latter

⁶⁸ *FH* 1.6 (Wickham, pp. 55-6; Feder II B 6).

⁶⁹ XV-XVII anathematize those who assert that the theophanies of the Old Testament are the appearance of the 'Ingenerate [ἀγέννητον]' and not the Son, which implicitly takes up Photinus' claim that the Son was not begotten until the Incarnation.

⁷⁰ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 71.1.3 (PG 42:375A; ET F. Williams, 418).

beginning only at the Incarnation.⁷¹ Any of these, and certainly all together, would have been sufficient grounds for condemnation and deposition.

But what is interesting is that it is another, non-characteristically ‘Marcellan’, charge that dominates Latin caricatures from Hilary to Augustine: adoptionism. It is, in fact, first mentioned briefly in the Sirmian anathemas: ‘[those who say that] the Son is only a man from Mary, let them be anathema’.⁷² Hilary then takes it up in the *De Trinitate*, where he sarcastically lauds Photinus for correcting Sabellius’ error in ignoring the humanity of Christ, but in turn fails to recognize his divinity: ‘The man is raised to the status [*usurpatur*] of Son by him’;⁷³ ‘Photinus elevates the man [*usurpat*], but in elevating the man he ignores the birth of God before the ages [*nativitatem Dei ante saeculum ignorat*].’⁷⁴ He calls him *noster Ebion* on account of this assertion of Christ as a mere man. Philastrius links Photinus with Paul of Samosata, ‘whose doctrine he followed in all things [*doctrinam eius secutus in omnibus*]’, and on that basis asserts that he taught that ‘Christ was a righteous man, not true God [*Christum hominem justum, non Deum verum esse*]’.⁷⁵ Ambrose, however, couples Photinus with Arius, since they both deny the ‘Godhead’: Photinus does this by ‘deny[ing] Him to be God, whose Godlike works you see all around you’.⁷⁶ The same theme is emphasized in the writings of Ambrosiaster: ‘Photinus does not allow that Christ is God...[but] he confesses that he raised himself from the dead’;⁷⁷ ‘Photinus denies that Christ is God; Manichaeus that he

⁷¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 71.2.2; anathema VIII. This doctrine resembles that of Marcellus, who asserts that the only title properly ascribed to the pre-incarnate is Word, for he maintains that all other scriptural usage refers to the Incarnate Christ (including the contentious *Prov* 8:22). The Son refers properly to the Incarnate Word, begotten of Mary, who is the visible image of the invisible God. He does, however, occasionally apply the title ‘Son’ to the pre-incarnate (e.g., *Letter to Julius* apud Epiphanius, *Pan.* 72.2.6; see S. Parvis, *Marcellus*, pp. 30-7). Whether this is just a misconstrual of what Photinus taught or whether he did take matters further than Marcellus is unclear. The anathemas are preserved in full at Athanasius, *Syn.* 27 (*AW* ii.7 pp. 253-6).

⁷² Anathema IX. Athanasius, *Syn.* 27.9 (*AW* ii.7 p. 255): εἴ τις ἄνθρωπον μόνον λέγοι τὸν ἐκ Μαρίας υἱόν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω; Hilary, *De Synodis* 38.9 (PL 10:510B): ‘*Si quis hominem solum dicit de Maria Filium*’.

⁷³ Hilary, *De Trin.* 7.7 (CCSL 72, p. 267).

⁷⁴ Hilary, *De Trin.* 7.7 (CCSL 72, p. 267).

⁷⁵ Philastrius, *De Div. Haer.* 64-5 (CCSL 9, pp. 243-4).

⁷⁶ Ambrose, *De Fide* 2.13.117 (FC 47/2, p. 334).

⁷⁷ Ambrosiaster, *Ad Galatas* 1.1.2 (PL 17:339C): *Photinus Christum Deum concedat...quem se ipsum a mortuis excitasse fatetur*. This is in opposition to the Manichees, who deny the humanity of Christ

is man',⁷⁸ 'the Jews and Photinus deny that Jesus is God on account of zeal for the law'.⁷⁹ In the Latin heresiological tradition, Photinus becomes an adoptionist, who denies the divinity of Christ. Certainly this is at least in part due to later Latin ignorance of Photinus' two hypostasis theology and its Marcellan context, but it may also indicate that Photinus was condemned at Milan and Rome precisely on the grounds of this supposed adoptionist Christology. In so doing, the Western bishops would have been able to make a clear, if implicit, distinction between the doctrines of Marcellus and Photinus.

The years following the synod of Serdica witnessed the escalation of theological controversy (both Christological and Trinitarian) in the West, in spite of the temporary reconciliation of Ursacius and Valens with Julius and the pro-Athanasian bishops. The Eusebian alliance seems to have found a considerable number of supporters in the West. Photinus, moreover, further muddled the doctrinal waters, surely leading many Western bishops to fear the loss of doctrinal purity even more.

3. Escalation, Part Two: Sirmium to Milan (351-55)

Magnentius' usurpation of Constans on the eighteenth of January in 350 heralded a decisive turn of events that would gradually change the course of the debate in the West in the subsequent half decade.⁸⁰ The usurping general was only able to hold Constans' territory as far East as Italy, losing control of Illyricum to Constantius.⁸¹ It was while Constantius was in Sirmium in the autumn of 351⁸² that a synod was finally able to accomplish what had been unsuccessfully been attempted three times prior – the

[*Christum hominem*] and that he was crucified. Ambrosiaster thinks that the Photinian position is decisively refuted by *Gal* 1:1.

⁷⁸ Ambrosiaster, *Ad Philippenses* 1.1 (PL 17:403C): *Photinus enim Christum Deum negat, et Manichaeus hominem*. Ambrosiaster here describes the *sancti* as those who 'confess that Christ is God and man'.

⁷⁹ Ambrosiaster, *Ad Romanos* 1.1.2 (PL 17:47D): *Judaeis autem et Photino propter zelum Legis, Jesum negare quod Deus sit*.

⁸⁰ Magnentius was proclaimed Augustus at Autun. See Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 101.

⁸¹ Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 101.

⁸² Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 221.

deposition of Photinus.⁸³ As noted above, the creed promulgated by the council was the fourth creed of Antioch, with the Serdican anathemas and twenty-six additional ones drafted at Sirmium. Although Photinus was no ally of the Western bishops, this was the first occasion on which a Eusebian creed was ratified on Western soil.

The controversy then continued to shift, as Hanson notes, ‘with the Emperor, farther west’.⁸⁴ On 28 September 351, Constantius won a key battle at Mursa against Magnentius, forcing the general’s troops back to Aquileia; by the next September, Constantius was in control of Italy, and during the following summer he retook Gaul, with Magnentius perishing by his own hand.⁸⁵ After Magnentius had been overcome in 353, Constantius wintered in Arles, where a synod of eastern and Gallic bishops was convoked. Sulpicius Severus writes that the bishops were required to subscribe to a letter – most likely the synodical letter of Sirmium 351 – that condemned Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius.⁸⁶ Paulinus of Trier refused to condemn Athanasius and was sent into exile.⁸⁷ This seems to have been the inauguration of Constantius’ policy of having the decisions of Sirmium ratified across the West.

Roughly eighteen months later, when spending the summer at Milan, Constantius called yet another council in an attempt to gain more Western subscriptions to the Sirmian encyclical. Two prominent Italian bishops – Eusebius of Vercelli and Lucifer of Cagliari – were exiled when they refused to condemn Athanasius. According to Sulpicius, Dionysius, Milan’s bishop, initially agreed to condemn Athanasius but desired that the synod undertake an investigation of the ‘true faith [*vera fides*]’. Valens and Ursacius withdrew to the imperial palace to discuss the matter with Constantius, who issued a letter expounding doctrines (presumably those subscribed to at Sirmium) to which Dionysius could not give his assent; he, too, was sent into exile.⁸⁸ Hilary gives a slightly different, perhaps conflicting, account in his polemical work *Against Valens and*

⁸³ Socrates, *HE* 2.29.1-5. Although Socrates asserts that Ossius was present at the council ‘against his will’, Barnes argues, rightly in my view, that this is a conflation with the events of 357 (*Athanasius*, p. 272, n.1).

⁸⁴ R.P.C. Hanson, *Search*, p. 325.

⁸⁵ T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 105-6;

⁸⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* 2.37.3; cf. T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 115.

⁸⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* 2.39.2.

⁸⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* 2.39.2.

Ursacius. He asserts that Eusebius insisted that before he would condemn Athanasius the bishops ought to prove their orthodoxy by subscribing to the Nicene creed; Dionysius was the first to volunteer, but as he was about to subscribe Valens wrenched the pen from his hand and suspended the council.⁸⁹

If the account as preserved by Hilary is mere legend, it must have grown quickly to have been included in a work composed no later than 358. Either way, it reflects a new development in Latin theology: the emergence of the Nicene creed as the standard of orthodoxy. The creed was also recited at Bitterae in 356 when Hilary himself was exiled – the first time he claims to have ‘heard’ [*audire*] the creed – and he included it in *Against Valens and Ursacius* for the benefit of those Latin readers who did not know its contents.⁹⁰ The case for Nicaea’s newly-acquired prominence should not be overstated, however, as though Latin bishops had been entirely ignorant of it: Julius of Rome, likely under Athanasius’ influence, considered the Nicene creed a uniquely powerful statement of orthodoxy, and he was not keen to see it replaced.⁹¹ But Julius was an arbiter in the Eastern ecclesiastical disputes and was certainly more attuned to theological developments there than many of his Western Latin colleagues were. And it may well be his successor Liberius who was responsible for popularizing the Nicene creed in the West. Timothy Barnes has suggested that Athanasius’ *De Decretis* was in fact a lengthy letter written for Liberius meant to put ‘the Council of Nicaea and its creed at the centre of the ecclesiastical controversy’.⁹² Athanasius and Liberius had certainly corresponded with one another and both the context and timing fit. Moreover, in 353/4, Liberius sent a letter to Constantius pleading with him to call a council that would adopt the Nicene creed for the sake of the church’s peace.⁹³ Whatever the origin of the movement, the evidence suggests that beginning in 353 the Nicene creed and the theology underlying it

⁸⁹ FH 1.11.3 (Wickham, p. 69; Feder Appendix II 3): *Ubi profitenda scribere coepit, Valens calamum et cartam e manibus eius violenter extorsit clamans non posse fieri.*

⁹⁰ FH 1.9.7 (Wickham, p. 61; Feder B II 9, 10).

⁹¹ Ossius and Protogenes had to defend the drafting of a new statement of faith at Serdica on the grounds that it merely supplemented the ‘firm and fixed’ creed of Nicaea (*Letter of Ossius and Protogenes to Julius EOMLA* i.2.4, p. 644).

⁹² Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 110-12 at p. 111. His assertion is accepted by C. Beckwith, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity: From De Fide to De Trinitate* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 26.

⁹³ FH 2.3.6 (Wickham, pp. 74-5; Feder A VII 6).

were becoming increasingly significant for Latin bishops as they were pressed to accept a theology that clearly subordinated the Son to the Father.

4. Climax: The Exile of Liberius to Constantinople (355-60)

The attendance at the synods was small, and Constantius saw to it that the synodical letter of Sirmium 351 was circulated to the Western bishops for subscription as early as 353, with those refusing to subscribe being threatened with exile. Liberius gives evidence of this happening across Italy in his first letter to Eusebius of Vercelli (1.1.2) and Athanasius gives a description of the process in Egypt in his *Historia Arianorum* (31.2-3). It is not clear when exactly the letter circulated in Spain and the extent to which it did, but it likely happened in late 355 or early 356. Following the synod of Milan, Constantius seems to have desired the capitulation of two of the most prominent Western bishops – Liberius and Ossius. He summoned both to his court in Milan to subscribe to the Sirmium decisions: Liberius was exiled to Thrace,⁹⁴ but Ossius was granted permission to return to Cordoba, perhaps owing to his extreme old age and seniority as a bishop.⁹⁵ Constantius did not concede defeat, however, and he sent officials to Spain threatening Ossius and other unnamed Spanish bishops into subscribing against Athanasius, although without success.⁹⁶ This may well be the first instance in which Spanish bishops were confronted with Eusebian theology and pressured to condemn Athanasius. It certainly marked the arrival of the Arian controversy to the Iberian peninsula.

The resistance was short lived, however. Around this very time, Potamius, the bishop of Lisbon, who had hitherto been a firm defender of Nicaea, appears to have accepted a *fiscus fundalis* from Constantius in exchange for his subscription against Athanasius. The *Libellus Precum* suggests that out of spite towards Ossius, who condemned him as a heretic, Potamius became involved in the affair.⁹⁷ Sometime in

⁹⁴ *Hist. Ar.* 40.

⁹⁵ *Hist. Ar.* 43.

⁹⁶ *Hist. Ar.* 45; for the date, see De clerq, *Ossius*, p. 455.

⁹⁷ *Lib.* 9.32; De clerq, *Ossius*, p. 454.

356, Ossius was again summoned to Constantius, this time in Sirmium, where he was imprisoned and harassed for an entire year. When Potamius of Lisbon arrived in the summer of 357, Ossius was ready to capitulate and he consented to have his name attached to a manifesto that formally repudiated the use of *homoousion* and *homoiousion*.⁹⁸ Although Hilary names Ossius and Potamius as the authors of the so-called Blasphemy of Sirmium, it must have been drafted by Valens, Ursacius, and Germinius, who are named in the opening lines of the text. Ossius did not, however, subscribe against Athanasius or Marcellus, which may in part explain why he receives such sympathetic treatment in the *Historia Arianorum*. One may also reasonably suppose that Athanasius is not being untruthful in his account of the events: considerable pressure must have been exerted for someone so staunchly opposed to Eusebian theology – Ossius supported the strongly Marcellan ‘Western creed of Serdica’ as a supplement to Nicaea – to circumscribe entirely the use of the *homoousion*.

This was a catastrophic event for the Nicene cause in the West, because one of the key players at the council was now repudiating the theology it espoused. The Sirmium manifesto is especially notable for its lack of interest in conciliating the pro-Nicene Western bishops. The most clearly contentious point of the manifesto is its rejection of both *homoousion* and *homoiousion*, on the grounds that the terms are unscriptural and that no one can understand the generation of the Son except the Father.⁹⁹ But the manifesto is also explicit in its total subordination of the Son to the Father ‘in honour, dignity, splendour, majesty [*honore, dignitate, claritate, maiestate*]’.¹⁰⁰

Timothy Barnes has correctly noted (*contra*, e.g., Hanson) that the document to which Ossius signed up was not a creed drafted in a council but a ‘theoretical statement’ and a ‘trial balloon’; it was not a document to which other bishops could be coerced into

⁹⁸ Hilary, *Syn.* 11.

⁹⁹ Hilary, *Syn* 11 (PL 10:488A-489A): *nec quemquam praedicare ea de causa et ratione quod nec in divinis Scripturis contineatur, et quod super hominis scientiam sit, nec quisquam possit nativitatem Filii enarrare, de quo Scriptum est, Generationem ejus quis enarrabit (Isa 53:8)? Scire autem manifestum est solum Patrem quomodo genuerit filium suum, et Filium quomodo genitus sit a Patre.*

¹⁰⁰ Hilary, *Syn.* 11 (PL 10:489A).

subscribing.¹⁰¹ We know from Hilary's *De Synodis* that the bishops of Gaul and Britain received a copy very quickly (2), as did a number of unnamed Easterners, presumably Basil of Ancyra's group (3). This must reflect a broad and quick dissemination of the manifesto. It received a chilly reception from both of the aforementioned recipients and it cannot be deemed a theological success; it did, however, serve to humiliate and discredit the symbolic figurehead of Nicaea. There were, moreover, immediate practical ecclesiastical implications in Spain. The *Libellus precum ad Imperatores* claims that Constantius threatened exile to any bishop who would not hold communion with Ossius;¹⁰² tendentious though the work is, it is entirely plausible that Constantius would have made such a threat. Indeed, Constantius may have been hoping to bait Spanish bishops into publicly denouncing Ossius and refusing communion with him, thereby exposing themselves to punishment. According to both the *Libellus precum* and a letter of Eusebius of Vercelli, Gregory of Elvira took the bait and narrowly escaped with his see.¹⁰³ The narrative description of Gregory being dragged to Cordoba to defend himself before an embarrassed and angry Ossius, who was struck dead by the judgment of God, is clearly apocryphal and cannot be trusted for historical detail. But it does point to the rapidly shifting theological climate in Spain, which seems to have thus far avoided the conflict that was raging in Italy and Gaul.

With the exile of Paulinus of Trier, Dionysius of Milan, Lucifer of Cagliari, Eusebius of Vercelli, Hilary of Poitiers, Rhodanius of Toulouse, and Liberius of Rome and the capitulation of Ossius of Cordoba, it was clear by 357 that the crisis mounting in the West was serious. And surely a large number of Latin speaking bishops must have had a difficult time coping with the changing situation. They were being pressured to subscribe to the condemnation of an Eastern bishop of whose orthodoxy they had earlier been assured and to assent to theological propositions that had grown out of debates that were largely foreign to them. Two treatises composed by Hilary of Poitiers in 356-8 would work to fill this lacuna and bring Western bishops up to speed on Eastern developments. The first is a compendious work later known as *Against Valens and*

¹⁰¹ Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 139.

¹⁰² *Lib.* 32. See the analysis of the narrative in Appendix Two.

¹⁰³ *Lib.* 33-40; *FH* 3.2.1-2 (Wickham, pp. 95-6; Feder A II 1-2)

Ursacius, which was composed in the 356/7 and had sequels added to it in 359/60 and 367.¹⁰⁴ The work now exists only in fragments, which include the encyclical letters of the Eastern and Western synods of Serdica; letters of the Western Serdican synod to Julius and Constantius; two letters of Valens and Ursacius; and a copy of the Nicene creed. Hilary also inserts his own interpretation of the documents and their historical context between the excerpts. Whatever other documents were originally included, it is clear that one of its key aims was to reacquaint Western bishops with the documents produced at Serdica. This is unsurprising, since that synod exonerated both Athanasius and Marcellus, and it directly repudiated the kind of Eusebian theology that was promulgated by Sirmium 351. The second work is *On the Synods*, which was composed in the winter of 357/8.¹⁰⁵ The work is in fact a letter addressed to the bishops of Gaul and Britain (1), who had recently refused to subscribe to the synodical letter of Sirmium (2) and were now writing to enquire about theological developments in the East (5), about which they were presumably largely ignorant. *On the Synods* refutes the Blasphemy of Sirmium and seeks to find a common ground between those who confess that the Son is of the same essence (likely the majority of Western bishops) and of like essence (those around Basil of Ancyra) to the Father. The tone of the work is eirenic: the Blasphemy of Sirmium is depicted as the work of radical, yet politically powerful, Arians who so deeply transgressed the bounds of orthodoxy that they immediately had to condemn their own work (27). Hilary contrasts the Blasphemy with the creeds of the Dedication synod (29-30), the Eastern synod of Serdica (34), and Sirmium 351 (38), which he argues tacitly evidence the same theology as Nicaea, although they do not explicitly use the *homoousion* (28). Although he criticizes the term *homoiousion* at the end of the work as lacking the force of *homoousion* (89), he believes that strong ‘likeness’ language (‘like according to essence’; ‘like in all things’) can adequately capture Nicene theology, even without the use of *ousia* language: ‘Beloved brothers, in proclaiming that the Son is like

¹⁰⁴ Wickham, p. xxiv.

¹⁰⁵ Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 141.

the Father in all things, we say nothing other than that he is equal [*similem Filium in omnibus Patri, nihil aliud quam aequalem praedicamus*].¹⁰⁶

Hilary's works changed the level of theological discourse and knowledge of Eastern ecclesiastical events in the West, and they contributed to the hardening of the pro-Nicene sentiment: Phoebadius of Agen used *Against Valens and Ursacius* in writing his *Contra Arianos* and Gregory of Elvira knew both works when he composed his *De Fide*. In 359, the controversy came to a head, with Constantius resolved to establish doctrinal unity across the Empire by means of twin councils at Ariminum and Seleucia.¹⁰⁷ To ensure adequate attendance at Ariminum – a problem that plagued both the synods of Arles and Milan – imperial officers were sent throughout Italy, Africa, the Gauls, the Spains, and Britain to coerce participation and provide means of transportation.¹⁰⁸

Both synods were meant to adopt a creed that had been drafted in advance at Sirmium by Marcus of Arethusa, with Valens, Ursacius, Germinius, Basil of Ancyra and a few others present, which was approved by Constantius and dated to the eleventh of the kalends of June.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, this 'dated' creed forbade the use of *homoousion* and it contained the assertion that the Son is 'like the Father in all things'. The prefect Taurus was placed in charge of overseeing the council at Ariminum to ensure that things went Constantius' way. The gathered bishops, numbering more than four hundred, did not realize that a statement of faith had been composed in advance, and it was sprung on them by a group consisting of Germinius, Auxentius, Valens, Ursacius, Demophilus, and Gaius.¹¹⁰ The overwhelmingly negative response to the 'dated' creed demonstrates the extent to which Hilary, Eusebius, Phoebadius and their allies were successful in establishing the Nicene creed as the measure of Christian orthodoxy in West in the 350s.

¹⁰⁶ *Syn.* 72 (PL 10:527C).

¹⁰⁷ Hilary preserves a copy of Constantius' letter to the bishops assembled at Ariminum, wherein he states: 'For the prosperity of all peoples everywhere will extend and sure concord be secured, when your Sincerities have set in motion the consequences attendant upon the utter removal of all disputes on such things' (*FH* 2.11.1; ET Wickham, p. 81; Feder A VIII 2).

¹⁰⁸ Sulpicius, *Chron.* 2.41.1.

¹⁰⁹ For Sirmium as the location, see Socrates, *HE* 2.37.18-24. For the list of bishops, see the Letter of George of Laodicea (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 73.22.5-8) and the letter of Germinius (*FH* 3.7.3; Wickham, p. 101; Feder B VI 1); on the date, see Athanasius, *Syn.* 8.2.

¹¹⁰ Athanasius, *Syn.* 8.1; Socrates, *HE* 2.37.

The bishops first attempted to convince the five and their allies of the authority of Nicaea, and then they deposed them when that effort proved fruitless and composed a definition upholding the orthodoxy of the Nicene creed, maintaining that it is not inappropriate to use the term *substantia*, to which all the bishops of the majority Nicene party subscribed.¹¹¹ But this left the majority in a politically difficult situation – Constantius himself had approved of the wording of the ‘dated’ creed. They therefore drafted a carefully worded letter to Constantius, portraying Constantine as the slayer of the arch-heresy of Arianism and the Nicene creed as his weapon; Constantius certainly would not, they supposed, want to do undo the efforts of his ‘glorious’ father.¹¹²

The letter was despatched to Constantius by a group of ten to twenty episcopal legates.¹¹³ The minority party, which was sympathetic to Valens and Ursacius, withdrew from the synod and went to the court of Constantius. The latter delegation arrived first and was received by the emperor; the former was not given a hearing.¹¹⁴ Indeed, they were kept waiting under the pretense that Constantius was occupied with a campaign against the Barbarians. A letter to this effect was sent to the bishops at Ariminum, instructing them that they were not to leave until the delegation returned in due course.¹¹⁵ The delay, which dragged into the autumn, proved fruitful. In session at Nike on 6 Ides Oct, the wearied delegation nullified Ariminum’s earlier condemnation of Ursacius, Valens, and Germinius, and they adopted a confession of faith that proscribed the use of *ousia*-language and confessed the Son simply to be ‘like the Father [*similem patri*]’.¹¹⁶

The delegation shortly returned to Ariminum, and the bishops present were all expected to subscribe to the revised ‘homoian’ creed. Unsurprisingly, the initial reaction was one of hostility and betrayal. Taurus, however, was given strict orders not to allow

¹¹¹ Athanasius, *Syn.* 9. Copies of the definition and the proceedings of the synod are found at *FH* 2.12-13 (Wickham, pp. 81-2; *CaP* A IX 1-3), and the latter is dated 12 Kal Aug.

¹¹² *FH* 2.14.1-3 (Wickham, pp. 83-5; *CaP* A V 1, 1-3).

¹¹³ The party consisted of Rest[itu]tus [of Carthage], Gregory, Honoratus, Arthemius, Hyginus, Justin, Priscus, Primus, Taurinus, Lucius, Mustacius, Urbanus, Honoratus, and Solutor (*FH* 2.16.1; Wickham, p. 86; Feder A V 3, 1).

¹¹⁴ Socrates, *HE* 2.37.75-7.

¹¹⁵ Athanasius, *Syn.* 55.2-3.

¹¹⁶ Hilary, *FH* 2.16.2 (Wickham, p. 86; Feder A V 3,2); Sulpicius, *Chron.* 2.43.1.

the synod to dissolve until all had subscribed; if there came a point at which a number of less than fifteen continued to resist, these were to be sent into exile. Gradually, so Sulpicius claims, out of either fear or weariness the bishops began to subscribe. The number of resisters was whittled to twenty, and finally the two lone holdouts were Phoebadius and Servatio; they, too, were eventually induced to compromise.¹¹⁷ Delegations from both the synods of Ariminum and Seleucia subscribed to the ‘homoian’ creed on 31 December 359, and a small council formally ratified it at Constantinople in January 360 as the new imperial orthodoxy.¹¹⁸

5. Denouement: Paris to Alexandria (360-2)

After nearly a decade of ecclesiastical wrangling, Constantius had finally managed to secure doctrinal uniformity across the entire empire. His success, however, was entirely shortlived. In February 360 at Paris, Julian’s troops proclaimed him Augustus.¹¹⁹ Barnes notes that to demonstrate his independence from Constantius, ‘political interest, perhaps even political necessity, thus dictated that Julian pose as a champion of religious freedom, specifically the freedom of western bishops to adhere to the Nicene creed’.¹²⁰ The majority of Western bishops who attended the council of Ariminum cannot have been at all pleased that they were detained in the city for months, treated rudely by Constantius, and ultimately coerced into adopting a homoian creed on pain of exile.

¹¹⁷ Sulpicius, *Chron.* 2.43.1-2. A different and entirely implausible account is given by Socrates, *HE* 2.37.88-98. He asserts that the bishops at Ariminum, when they did not receive a reply from their second letter to Constantius, returned home to their sees. Constantius became enraged and ordered that the homoian creed be taken around to each bishop for subscription, under threat of exile. To begin with, it is highly unlikely that Taurus, who was charged with overseeing the synod and was ultimately awarded with an ordinary consulship, would have allowed the bishops to depart; they could much more easily be influenced while confined at Ariminum. Socrates, moreover, has his chronology wrong. He claims that Liberius refused to subscribe to the formula, was banished and subsequently replaced by Felix. But this happened in 355 following the synod of Milan – not in 359 following Ariminum.

¹¹⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 4.23.8; T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 148. There were in fact two delegations from Seleucia; those representing Basil of Ancyra’s moderate *homoiousian* theology spoke for the majority of bishops. Those sympathetic to Acacius of Caesarea, however, were the first to reach Constantius and, being in theological agreement with the Homoian delegation from Ariminum, persuaded the emperor to accept their viewpoint (Sozomen, *HE* 4.23.1-7).

¹¹⁹ Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 20.4.14: *Augustum Iulianum horrendis clamoribus concrepabant.*

¹²⁰ Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 153.

This unhappy lot would have been a prime target for support. Hilary was sufficiently confident in the stability of the Western political situation that he returned to Gaul in the spring of 360.¹²¹ By the end of the year, a synod was held in Paris that rejected the homoian creed and reaffirmed the Nicene creed as the only genuine statement of the catholic faith.¹²²

In November of 361, Constantius died from illness and Julian was declared Augustus in Constantinople the following month.¹²³ On 9 February 362, Julian's edict recalling exiled bishops to their sees was published in Alexandria and Athanasius made his triumphal return several weeks later.¹²⁴ The Christians lost whatever advantages they had accrued under Constantine and his sons as a result of Julian's reversion to paganism, but they were not directly persecuted and were free to manage the affairs of their churches. This meant that the Homoians, who had relied strongly upon imperial patronage, were severely disadvantaged. Perhaps the most significant event during this brief span was the synod of Alexandria, at which the assembled pro-Nicene bishops discussed the problem of what to do with bishops who had subscribed to the Homoian formulae at Ariminum and Seleucia; articulated Trinitarian and Christological doctrine; and attempted a resolution at the schism in Antioch, where there were three rival

¹²¹ Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 288, n. 9, doubts the reliability of the claim by Sulpicius, *Chron.* 2.45.4, that Hilary was expelled from the East after the synod of Seleucia for being a disturber of the churches. See also Williams, *Ambrose*, p. 41.

¹²² Hilary preserves a letter from the synod to the Eastern bishops – presumably Basil of Ancyra's party, since Hilary had brought correspondence from them to Gaul (*FH* 3.1.1-4; Wickham, pp. 93-5; Feder A I 1-4). The letter relates that the bishops at Ariminum were 'forced into silence on *ousia*', but that the bishops at Paris 'have embraced the term *homoousion* in reference to the true and genuine birth of the only-begotten God from God the Father' (*FH* 3.1.2; Wickham, p. 93). On the occasion of the synod, see Sulpicius, *Chron.* 2.45.5. Brennecke, *Homöer*, p. 87, n.1 asserts that Julian himself was present at the synod, encouraging dissent against Constantius' theological policies, but Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 288, n. 12, disputes this on the grounds that Julian was not then in Paris; he would have been in Vienne (Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 20.10.3).

¹²³ Socrates, *HE* 3.1.1.

¹²⁴ *Hist. ac.* 7.10. This is usually the date on which scholars have assumed that Julian promulgated the edict (e.g., Hanson, *Search*, p. 639). But, as Barnes argues (*Athanasius*, p. 154), as a political gesture the edict would certainly have carried more weight before Constantius' death. He, therefore, proposes that Julian first issued the edict in 360 shortly after his proclamation as Augustus, but that the *comes Orientis* hesitated to transmit the contents of the edict in the light of Julian's restoration of paganism.

parties.¹²⁵ The synod was small, but it contained representatives from West, including Eusebius of Vercelli and deacons of Lucifer of Cagliari, all of whom had been in exile in the Thebaid; it thus had important implications for the West.¹²⁶ For our purposes, the doctrinal resolutions are less relevant, but they are highly significant for the subsequent history of doctrine. The synod proclaimed the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be *homoousios*;¹²⁷ took an agnostic line on whether there are one or three *hypostaseis*;¹²⁸ and affirmed that Christ possessed a human soul as well as flesh.¹²⁹ What is decisively important to note is the enshrinement of Nicene orthodoxy.¹³⁰ The synod also attempted to effect a resolution between the Melitians and Eustathians (represented by Paulinus) – the two pro-Nicene factions in Antioch – by requiring the former to anathematize the Arian heresy and those who deny the consubstantiality of the Spirit and to affirm the Nicene faith;¹³¹ it is clear that the synod hoped that the Meletians would submit to Paulinus’ authority, although it is not clear what role they expected Meletius himself to play.

The most relevant aspect of the synod from our perspective is its lenient attitude towards those who subscribed to Homoian formulae. In a letter to Rufinianus composed shortly after the synod, Athanasius writes that those who lapsed ‘out of necessity or violence [δι’ ἀνάγκην καὶ βίαν]’ should be fully restored not only to communion, but also to the clergy.¹³² This ruling, Athanasius asserts, is in keeping with what has been decreed in Gaul and Spain.¹³³ Certainly, this seems to have been the approach that

¹²⁵ Accounts of the synod are to be found in Socrates, *HE* 3.7.1-24; Sozomen, *HE* 5.12.1-5; Theodoret, *HE* 3.4.2-3; Rufinus, *HE* 1.28-31. Documents produced by the synod are the *Epistula Catholica* and *Tomos ad Antiochenos*, composed/revised by Athanasius.

¹²⁶ *Tom. ad Ant.* 1; Sozomen, *HE* 5.12.1.

¹²⁷ *Tom. ad Ant.* 3.

¹²⁸ *Tom. ad Ant.* 6.

¹²⁹ *Tom. ad Ant.* 7.

¹³⁰ Nicaea stands alone; the memorandum supposedly issued at Serdica is to be disregarded (*Tom. ad Ant.* 5).

¹³¹ *Tom. ad Ant.* 3.

¹³² Athanasius, *Ep. Ad Ruf.* (PL 26:1180B-C). Although this was the prevailing opinion, Rufinus asserts that there were dissenters present who wanted no leniency to be shown towards the lapsed (*HE* 1.28).

¹³³ *Ep. Ad Ruf.* (PL 26:1180B). No record exists of these synods.

Hilary took.¹³⁴ Eusebius was later charged with circulating the synod's encyclical in the Latin West.¹³⁵

The position of Lucifer of Cagliari is rather unclear. His writings reveal him to be a rigorist at heart. His deacons did, however, subscribe to the synod's resolutions, so he is unlikely to have been entirely opposed to measures of leniency towards lapsed clergy. He himself was not present, having gone straightaway to Antioch to effect a resolution.¹³⁶ Lucifer, however, made things disastrously worse by ordaining Paulinus bishop when the Meletians proved intransigent. When Eusebius arrived, he did not chastise Lucifer out of respect for him, but he was clearly upset by the developments. Lucifer seems to have taken Eusebius' disapproval of his ordination of Paulinus personally and broken communion with him. It may have been personal animus that caused him to reject the decision of the synod to allow lapsed bishops to remain in the clergy, retiring to Sardinia where he seems to have cut himself off from the wider ecclesiastical world and birthed the schismatic Luciferian movement.¹³⁷

As D.H. Williams has cogently demonstrated, however, the readmission of lapsed bishops to the Nicene communion was not the only issue that remained. There was still a significant Homoian minority in the West; Ursacius, Valens, and Germinius hold on to their sees well into the 360s, and major sees such as Milan (Auxentius) were held well into the 370s, with homoian communities persisting even later.¹³⁸ There was

¹³⁴ Sulpicius, *Chron.* 2.45.5.

¹³⁵ Rufinus, *HE* 1.30

¹³⁶ The Greek historians all suggest or imply that Lucifer and Eusebius agreed upon this course of action; cf. Socrates, *HE* 3.6.1; Sozomen, *HE* 5.12.1; Theodoret, *HE* 3.4.6. Rufinus, however, asserts that Eusebius 'begged' Lucifer to come to Alexandria, but that the latter obstinately refused and went straight to Antioch (*HE* 10.28).

¹³⁷ Socrates, *HE* 3.9.5 in particular asserts that Lucifer rejected the Alexandrian synod's decision out of malice to get back at Eusebius (cf. Sozomen, *HE* 5.13.4). The possibility remains, however, that Lucifer was simply unhappy with the lenient judgment of the synod and saw Eusebius' (and his own deacons') acceptance of it as a betrayal; indeed, it may have been a pretext that allowed him to wriggle out of his deacons' subscription at Alexandria. If Eusebius' letter to Gregory of Elvira is any indication, he himself was initially a rigorist, whose sentiments likely fomented during his years of exile (*FH* 3.2.1-2; Wickham, pp. 95-6; Feder A II 1-2). In any event, the historians do not give a significantly compelling account of why precisely Eusebius' rejection of Lucifer's ordination of Paulinus caused Lucifer to withdraw from communion with the entire church.

¹³⁸ See especially Williams, *Ambrose*, chapter three.

thus not a time in the fourth century that Western bishops could take Nicene theology entirely for granted.

II. THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE *TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO*

The Christology of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* cannot be properly understood and its context cannot be properly elucidated apart from a clear picture of the ecclesiastical events that unfolded in the West between the years 325-362 – that is, between the council of Nicaea and the synod of Alexandria. The historical survey we have undertaken has demonstrated that the ‘Arian’ controversy spread gradually to the West, but it had made a significant impact as far west as Italy by the early 340s. In that decade, the Western bishops not only had the subordinationist theology of the Eusebians to worry about – manifest most patently and worryingly in Ursacius and Valens’ attribution of suffering and passibility to the Word – but also the seemingly radical modalism of Photinus, whose two-hypostasis theology was easily susceptible to the charge of adoptionism. The controversy continued to escalate in the 350s, as Constantius sought to have the decisions of the synod of Sirmium 351 – which includes the creed of the Dedication synod and the lengthy anathemas against Marcellus and Photinus – ratified by the Western bishops. The language and theological underpinning of the creed was thoroughly entwined in Eastern debates, concerning which many Latin bishops cannot have had a firm grasp. What precisely was heterodox about saying that the Son was ‘the exact image of the substance, will, power, and glory of the Father’; claiming that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were ‘three in hypostasis’; or anathematizing those who say that ‘the Son is a creature like one of the creatures’? Certainly, Serdica had exonerated Athanasius and its ‘creed’ had depicted the fourth creed of Antioch as radically subordinationist, but a decade had passed since then. Even in 359, long after the publication of Hilary’s two compendious works, the large group of Western bishops at Ariminum were not able to recognize the baleful subtext of denying that the ‘Son is a creature *like one of the creatures*’.

This general haziness about the particulars of the Eastern theological debates must certainly have been one of the key motivations behind the promotion of the Nicene

creed and its watchword *homoousion* as the standard for Christian orthodoxy in the West during the years 353-59; it was also the motivation for Hilary to compose the *Against Valens and Ursacius* and the *On the Synods*. Only the confession that the Son was ‘of one substance with the Father [*unius substantiae cum patre*]’ could secure the soteriological efficacy of Christ. Any statement that did not explicitly make such a declaration would have to be rejected as inadequate, regardless of what else it seemed to say. A clear rule of faith was needed. The success of this campaign likely precipitated the drafting of the directly anti-Nicene Sirmian manifesto of 357. From this point on, Nicaea and the *homoousion* were at the centre of theological debate in the West. Hilary attempted a compromise with the *homoiousians* and their conciliatory creed in his *De Synodis*, but that was an Eastern phenomenon that never had a role to play in the West, where the lines were firmly drawn between ‘Nicene’ and ‘homoian’.¹³⁹

1. The Christology of the *De Fide* and *Tractatus Origenis*

Although the controversy arrived in Spain rather later than it did in Italy and Gaul – perhaps not until late 355 – the same theological pattern emerged when it did, as is clearly evident from Gregory’s *De Fide Orthodoxa Contra Arianos*. The text is extant in two recensions: the first likely dates to the immediate aftermath of Ariminum in 360/1 and the second to perhaps three or four years later.¹⁴⁰ After circulating the first version, he was charged with overemphasizing the unity of Father and Son and falling into

¹³⁹ On which see Williams, *Ambrose*, chapter three.

¹⁴⁰ The broad consensus is that Gregory first took up the anti-Arian cause in 360/1 after the capitulation of the Western bishops at Ariminum (See M. Simonetti, ‘Gregory of Elvira’, in *Patrology* 4 (South Bend, IN, 1986), pp. 86-7; and, more recently, see J. Pascual Torró, *La Fe* (Fuentes Patristica 11; Madrid, 1998), p. 12). Barnes has argued, erroneously in my view, for a date of 358 – that is, following the dissemination of the Sirmian manifesto and not the synod of Ariminum – on the grounds that Gregory defends the *homoousion* but ‘ignores the formula “alike in all things” officially adopted in 359’ (*Athanasius*, p. 143). This claim is problematic for two reasons. First, although the ‘dated’ creed, which was the subject of the initial discussion, contains the phrase ‘like the Father in all things’, the Nike creed that was adopted at both Ariminum and Constantinople (360) simply reads ‘like the Father’. Since ‘like the Father in all things’ was never officially ratified by a council of bishops, why should Gregory have felt the need to address it? Secondly, Gregory quite clearly repudiates the use of the much stronger term *homoiousion* on the grounds that likeness is not the same thing as equality (*De Fide* 22). There would have thus been no need for him separately to condemn either ‘like the Father in all things’ or ‘like the Father’.

Sabellianism: ‘I am amazed that it could have been heard as if we denied the proper person of the Word, which is the Son’.¹⁴¹ In the prologue that he appended to the second version, Gregory took great pains to demonstrate that his confession of unity did not undermine the plurality of the persons: ‘This is the perfect trinity existing in unity, which we confess is clearly of one substance’.¹⁴² The main difference between the actual text of the two versions is Gregory’s attempt to use more precise vocabulary. In many places, for example, he amends *substantia* to *essentia*.¹⁴³

The text is very clearly a defense of the Nicene creed – and, in particular, the term *homoousion* – with which the *De Fide* begins (1). Although the debates of the late 350s had long moved past the theology originally espoused by Arius, Gregory has a grasp of what the Alexandrian presbyter taught. Gregory has no trouble imputing to Arius the belief that the Son was ‘God from God [*deum de (ex) deo*]’; his error, rather, was in positing that the Son ‘was made by God, not begotten of God [*ut ex deo factus sit, non ex (de) deo natus*]’. This assertion, of course, leads to the impossibility that he could be ‘of one substance [*unius substantiae*]’ with the Father, and hence he can be neither ‘true son [*verus filius*]’ nor ‘true God [*verus deus*]’.¹⁴⁴ There is an absolutely crucial distinction between *deus* and *verus deus*. So concerned with terminological precision is Gregory that there can be no grey areas of compromise: unlike Hilary, he rejects out of hand the possibility that the *homoiousian* position can give an adequate account of the Son’s equality with the Father.¹⁴⁵ If the sameness of substance is not affirmed, then this opens the door to the confession that Christ is ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, ‘as Arius taught’.¹⁴⁶

Gregory is not, however, ignorant of the more recent arguments advanced against *homoousion* in the Sirmian manifesto and Nike creed. He advances the objection that ‘it

¹⁴¹ *De Fide* praef.6 (CCSL 69, p. 222): *Unde mirari me fateor hoc ita sentiri potuisse, quasi nos personam propriam verbi, quod est filius, negaremus.*

¹⁴² *De Fide* praef.10 (CCSL 69, p. 223): *Haec est perfecta trinitas in unitate consistens, quam scilicet unius substantiae profiteamur.*

¹⁴³ See, e.g., *De Fide* 18, 32, 35, 38, 51, 53. See also R.P.C. Hanson, *Search*, p. 521.

¹⁴⁴ *De Fide* 2.20 (CCSL 69, p. 225). Changes made to the second edition are noted in parentheses.

¹⁴⁵ *De Fide* 2.22 (CCSL 69, p. 225): *Denique sublato homoousion, id est unius substantiae vocabulo, homoiousion, id est similem similitudinem genitoris factori suo suo posuerunt, cum aliud similitudo, aliud veritas.*

¹⁴⁶ *De Fide* 2.23 (CCSL 69, p. 226).

is not right to use the term *homoousion*, because it is not in the divine scriptures'.¹⁴⁷ But Gregory will not let his hypothetical interlocutor rest there. He asks whether it is theologically correct to say that the Son is of the same substance of the Father, regardless of whether the exact terms are contained in Scripture.¹⁴⁸ If this is not to be believed, then Gregory cannot see how the interlocutor can avoid falling into Arianism, since the Son must therefore be created *ex nihilo* and *ab alia substantia*.¹⁴⁹ It is a simplistic and tendentious argument, but it demonstrates that Gregory knew that the Homoians were invoking an agnostic approach to the generation of the Son and were not at all interested in being associated with Arius and the ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων. Gregory also raises another problem with the logic of prohibiting the *homoousion*: both the Sirmian manifesto and the Nike creed contain the phrases *deum ex deo* and *lumen ex lumine*, neither of which are found in scripture.¹⁵⁰ It is thus hypocritical for the Homoians to exclude a particular phrase on the grounds that it does not appear in scripture.

To prove the correctness of all three statements, Gregory resolves to find 'God from God, light from light, and the expression of one substance in the divine scriptures'.¹⁵¹ He first argues that *John* 16:28 – 'I have gone out from the Father' – is simply another way of saying God from God, 'since we recognize that the Son of God was born from God the Father – true God from true God'.¹⁵² Moreover, since *1 John* 1:5 says that 'God is light [*Deus lux est*]' and *John* 1:9 calls Christ the 'true light [*lux vera*]', therefore 'rightly we believe light from light [*recte lumen de lumine credimus*]'.¹⁵³ Before proceeding to treat the *homoousion*, Gregory pauses to demonstrate that although the Homoians and Nicenes share the previous two professions, there is no common ground between them: 'You, however, do not say *lumen de lumine*, but rather *lumen ex lumine*, as though another light was created from the Father, who is the true light,

¹⁴⁷ *De Fide* 3.33 (CCSL 69, p. 228): *Sed dicis homoousion nominari non oportere, quia in scripturis divinis non contineatur.*

¹⁴⁸ *De Fide* 3.33-5.

¹⁴⁹ *De Fide* 3.35.

¹⁵⁰ *De Fide* 3.38.

¹⁵¹ *De Fide* 3.39.

¹⁵² *De Fide* 3.39 (CCSL 69, p. 229): *quia de deo patre filium dei deum verum de deo vero natum esse cognoscimus.*

¹⁵³ *De Fide* 3.40 (CCSL 69, p. 230).

because he is not from the substance of the Father'.¹⁵⁴ He then turns to a lengthy discussion of what precisely constitutes the *substantia dei*, and he finally finds the *homousion* in *John* 14:10, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me'; 10:30, 'I and the Father are one'; and 14:9, 'Whoever sees me, sees also the Father'.¹⁵⁵ The Father and Son, therefore, 'are one in respect to the unity of substance and the majesty of divinity [*de unitate substantiae et de maiestate deitatis*]',¹⁵⁶

Near the end of the treatise, Gregory turns from a discussion of the relationship between the pre-existent Word/Son and the Father to the doctrine of the Incarnation. Gregory's opponents pointed to the Incarnation as evidence of the mutability of the Son's substance and, hence, the impossibility that he could be of the same substance as the unchangeable Father.¹⁵⁷ The emptying of Christ described in *Phil* 2:7 was particularly problematic, and Gregory vigorously denies that 'he became other than what he was [*aliud quam quod fuerat*]',¹⁵⁸ He asserts that there was not a change of substance, but rather a concealing: 'For as the sun is covered with a cloud, so his brightness [*claritas*] is constrained, not blinded...and also that man, whom Jesus our Lord and saviour – that is God and son of God – put on [*induit*], did not cut off God in himself, but concealed Him'.¹⁵⁹ Since humanity cannot see God and live (cf. *Exod* 33:20; *De Fide* 8.90), the divine majesty [*maiestas*] had to be concealed so that it could be glimpsed without harm: 'That divine majesty, as I have said, which put on a body, reveals that it did not hide its own brightness to its own detriment, but as I said for the benefit of the flesh'.¹⁶⁰ In Gregory's attempt to protect the integrity of the divine substance in Christ, one might argue that he veers quite closely towards Doceticism, wherein the body is nothing more than an instrument – the cloud to the divinity's sun.

¹⁵⁴ *De Fide* 3.41 (CCSL 69, p. 230): *Tu autem non lumen de lumine, sed lumen ex lumine ita asseris, quasi a patre, qui verum lumen est, aliud lumen sit factum, quod de ipsa patris substantia non sit.*

¹⁵⁵ *De Fide* 3.53 (CCSL 69, p. 232).

¹⁵⁶ *De Fide* 3.54 (CCSL 69, p. 233).

¹⁵⁷ *De Fide* 8.74 (CCSL 69, p. 240): *Qui si de patris, inquit, esset substantia, numquam fieri posset, ut et carnem assumeret et invisibilis atque immutabilis cerneretur.*

¹⁵⁸ *De Fide* 8.88 (CCSL 69, p. 244).

¹⁵⁹ *De Fide* 8.89 (CCSL 69, p. 244): *Ut enim sol cum nube tegitur, claritas eius comprimitur, non caecatur...et homo ille, quem dominus Iesus salvatorque noster, id est deus deque filius induit, deum tamen in illo non interceptit, sed abscondit.*

¹⁶⁰ *De Fide* 8.90 (CCSL 69, p. 244): *Et maiestas illa divina, quae ut dixi corpus induerat, probat se non suo detrimento proprii latuisse fulgoris, sed carnis ut dixi, beneficio...*

But he does hint very briefly that the flesh has a more integral role to play in the Incarnation; Gregory does not have a doctrine of deification as such, but he does have a sense in which the illumination of the flesh by the divinity has radical consequences for the nature of embodied existence. He argues that ‘by the putting on of this body, illumined with virtue by the eternal light of his own glory, the light of the Holy Spirit and the grace of eternal life might redound to us through the path of his body’.¹⁶¹

The doctrine of the Incarnation thus has a significant role to play in the *De Fide* and it cannot be properly elucidated without first clearly establishing that the Word who became flesh is of the same divine substance as the Father. Gregory’s desire to protect the eternal Word/Son against charges of mutability and passibility is very much reflective of pro-Nicene Christology from the 360s as a whole. Hilary of Poitiers devotes the tenth book of his *De Trinitate* to the related charge that the suffering and anguish of Christ demonstrate a mutable and passible substance that cannot be the same as the substance of the Father.¹⁶²

Several homilies in the *Tractatus Origenis* also evidence a concern to defend the consubstantiality of Father and Son using language that is taken directly from the Nicene creed. At the conclusion to his homily on the playing of Isaac and Ishmael (*Tract.* 3), Gregory raises the question of why scripture refers to the messenger that consoles Hagar in the desert as both *angelus* and *deus*.¹⁶³ This is problematic, because an angel certainly cannot be God. Gregory resolves the dilemma by arguing that Scripture wishes to show a distinction between God the Father and God the Son and that ‘the Son of God, and not the Father, spoke to Hagar’.¹⁶⁴ This allows Gregory the opportunity to end the homily with a reflection on the relationship between Son and Father: ‘He is called angel on account of his obedience to the Father’s will and he is called God according to the nature

¹⁶¹ *De Fide* 8.93 (CCSL 69, pp. 245-6): *sed indumento eiusdem corporis aeterno claritatis suae lumine illustrato virtute ad nos per tramitem corporis eius lux sancti spiritus et aeternae vitae gratia redundaret.*

¹⁶² See esp. *Trin.* 10.9 (CCSL 72A, p. 465): *ex passionis metu et ex infirmitate patiendi non in natura eum impassibilis Dei fuisse.* On the subject, see the excellent recent article by C. Beckwith, ‘Suffering Without Pain: The Scandal of Hilary of Poitiers’ Christology’, in *In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honour of Brian E. Daley, S.J.* (ed. P. Martens; South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 71-96.

¹⁶³ *Tract.* 3.32.

¹⁶⁴ *Tract.* 3.32 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *Sed ideo hoc, ut ostenderet Scriptura divina Filium Dei, non Patrem ad Agar fuisse locutum.*

[*naturam*] of the Father, since he is truly God; for the Son of God, true God from true God, the only-begotten from the unbegotten, is not able to be other than God'.¹⁶⁵ There has clearly been a change in terminology since the *De Fide*; Gregory speaks not of the *substantia dei*, but rather of the *natura dei*. Indeed, *natura* is Gregory's favoured term in the *Tractatus Origenis*. But it remains crucial for Gregory to assert the shared being of Father and Son.

Gregory's debt to pro-Nicene theology is even more patent in his homily on the Benediction of Jacob (*Tract.* 6). In *Genesis* 49:9, Jacob refers to his son Judah as a 'lion's cub [*catulus leonis*]'. Gregory applies this typologically to Christ, and he argues that he is a *catulus leonis* to show that he is the Son of God: 'For when both lion and cub of a lion are said, and they indicate both Father and Son, in whom the nature [*natura*] is not divided, but a distinction of persons is shown. For just as a lion is born from a lion, thus it is said God proceeds from God and light from light. And just as when a lion is born from a lion the nature is not changed [*non natura mutatur*], but one origin is revealed, so also God born from God is not able to be other than God'.¹⁶⁶ Here, Gregory is not only concerned to demonstrate that there is a shared nature in Father and Son, but that the Father's act of begetting the Son does not result in any change or mutation of nature. The latter point especially remained an important obstacle for those who could not accept the eternal generation of the Son. Therefore, even though the terminology has changed somewhat from the *De Fide* (*substantia/essentia* has become *natura*) and the polemic is muted, Gregory's Christological vision remains shaped by pro-Nicene theology.

His homily on Pentecost (*Tract.* 20) is also significant, for it demonstrates the subtlety with which Gregory could employ pro-Nicene vocabulary, almost as if it had become a natural impulse. He writes that 'nobody denies that Christ is true God [*verum*

¹⁶⁵ *Tract.* 3.34 (CCSL 69, p. 27): *Ac proinde et angelus propter obedientiam paternae voluntatis dicitur et Deus secundum naturam Patris, quia vere Deus est, nuncupatur; Filius etenim Dei, Deus verus de Deo vero, unigenitus ab ingenito non potest alius esse quam Deus.*

¹⁶⁶ *Tract.* 6.35 (CCSL 69, p. 50): *Nam et cum leo et catulus leonis dicitur, et Pater et Filius indicatur, in quibus non natura dividitur, sed personae distinctae monstrantur. Sicut enim ex leone leo nascitur, ita Deus de Deo et lumen ex lumine procedere dicitur. Sicut enim, cum ex leone leo nascitur, non natura mutatur, sed una origo ostenditur, sic et Deus ex Deo natus aliud non potest esse quam Deus.*

deum] and true Son of God, born the onlybegotten from the unbegotten'.¹⁶⁷ In the *De Fide*, Gregory makes a crucial distinction between identifying Christ as *deum*, which even Arius does, and *verum deum*, which signifies his sharing of the Father's substance – a move neither Arius nor the Homoians would make.¹⁶⁸ When speaking of Christ's divinity, it becomes necessary for Gregory to employ the more robust *verum deum* rather than simply *deum*.

2. Christological Passages in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*

The task now remains to determine precisely how the Christology of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* relates to Gregory's other writings and where it best fits in the narrative we have provided of the Arian-Nicene conflict in the West. The Christological passages in the *Tractatus* are sufficiently few in number that we may survey them in depth.

(a) *Cant.* 1.6-7

'For from the time that Christ the Son of God deigned to come in human form and accept the flesh and soul of man as a spouse [*Christus filius dei secundum hominem venire dignatus est et carnem animamque hominis velut sponsam accipere*], the law and the prophets ceased...For *the church*, as the apostle defined it, *is the flesh of Christ* (Eph 1:22-3), who said: *And he is the head of the Church* (Eph 5:31). Upon whom then a kiss was impressed upon a kiss with faithful love [*cui tunc osculum ad osculum fida caritate impressum est*], when two were joined *in one flesh*, that is truth and peace joined to one another by mutual embraces, just as David said: *Truth and peace have embraced each other* (Ps 84:11-12). He says that *truth is arisen from the earth*, that is the flesh of Christ, who was born from the virgin mother [*id est caro Christi, qui de matre virgine natus est*], whose origin is the earth. *Peace looked down from heaven*, that is the Word

¹⁶⁷ *Tract.* 20.16 (CCSL 69, p. 145): *In hoc spiritu positus nemo negat Christum verum deum et verum dei filium unigenitum de ingenito natum.*

¹⁶⁸ *De Fide* 2.20 (CCSL 69, p. 225).

of God, who said: *I am peace* (Luke 24:36); and again: *my peace I give to you* (John 20:19).¹⁶⁹

Several important elements of Gregory's Christology become clear from the above passage. First, he elides any clear distinction between the flesh assumed in the Incarnation and the collective unity of baptized Christians who comprise the church: both are, for Gregory, the body of Christ. As noted above, this entire Christological-ecclesiological paradigm is founded upon *Eph* 1:22-3, where Paul himself makes this elision in order to highlight the church's role in continuing to embody and mediate Christ's presence on earth. And there is a very clear soteriological element to this doctrine: the coming of Christ represents a radical break between the old and new covenants. The indirect (and insufficient) mediation of the law and prophets is replaced by the person of Christ, who mediates God's presence directly both in the Incarnation and in the Church. To participate in the ecclesial community is thus to participate directly in the deified flesh of Christ.

Secondly, Gregory does not avoid technical theological discussion entirely. He speaks of the Incarnation as Christ the Son of God taking up [*accipere*] both the flesh and soul of a man. The union, indeed, between the divinity and humanity is so close that it is akin to the joining of two lovers in matrimony [*velut sponsam*]. Gregory continually emphasizes the closeness of the union through the language of kissing and embracing, which runs throughout the passage. The language is ultimately rather simplistic, but it is clear that he wishes to emphasize that it is genuine divinity and humanity that is joined in the Incarnation; adoptionism and doceticism must be excluded.

R.P.C. Hanson has argued that Gregory 'followed Hilary in attributing a human soul to Jesus'.¹⁷⁰ But this is to assume needlessly that Gregory's Christology as expressed in the *Tractatus* reflects the complexities of later fourth century debate on the matter. Hilary formulated his doctrine of Christ's soul as a way of responding to 'Arian'

¹⁶⁹ *Cant.* 1.6-7 (Schulz-Flügel, pp. 169-71).

¹⁷⁰ Hanson, *Search*, p. 525.

charges that the anguish of Christ in Gethsemane and on the cross demonstrated that the divine Word – which was the acting subject in the Incarnation – was passible.

According to Hilary, however, the anguish was only apparent and could not be real. In his anthropology, the flesh only experiences sensation because of the presence of the soul pervading it. Specifically, the body ‘endures pain through its admixture with a weak soul [*adfert itaque dolorem per animae infirmis admixtionem*]’.¹⁷¹ But Christ, argues Hilary, did not have a human nature touched by sin and, hence, imbued with weakness: ‘For that body is of a nature that is unique and its own, which was fashioned [*conformatur*] into the heavenly glory on the mountain’.¹⁷² He thus had a perfect soul that did not have the capacity to experience pain.¹⁷³ Although Hilary argues that the soul of Christ is impassible, it is still not to be confused with the Word, which has its own independent existence and function in the Incarnation. He is very clear that his opponents fell into error by teaching that the Word functioned as the soul in the body of Christ [*corpus officio animae vivificat*]’.¹⁷⁴

Gregory gives no particular theological function to the soul, as does Hilary; presumably, he asserts its existence to demonstrate that Christ assumed a full and complete human being in the Incarnation. The concept of the bride-soul [*anima sponsa*] itself is not without precedent in earlier Latin Christological reflection. Tertullian already recognized that the soul was one of the component parts (‘*substantiae hominis*’, in his vocabulary) of the *homo assumptus*.¹⁷⁵ A passage from the *De Resurrectione Carnis* is particularly relevant to our discussion, in which Tertullian applies the nuptial

¹⁷¹ Hilary, *Trin.* 10.14 (CCSL 72A, p. 470).

¹⁷² Hilary, *Trin.* 10.23 (CCSL 72A, p. 478): *Naturae enim propriae ac suae corpus illud est, quod in caelestem gloriam conformatur in monte.*

¹⁷³ Hilary, *Trin.* 10.23 (CCSL 72A, p. 478): *natura non habens ad dolendum.*

¹⁷⁴ Hilary, *Trin.* 10.50 (CCSL 72A, p. 504): *quod aut defecisse omnino Deum verbum in animam corporis volunt, ut non idem fuerit Iesus Christus hominis filius qui et Dei Filius; et aut de se defecerit Deus verbum, dum corpus officio animae vivificat.* See A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (trans. J.S. Bowden; London: A.R. Mowbray and Co., 1965), p. 309. Hanson, *Search*, p. 496 is not convinced that Hilary has any particularly coherent understanding of why the Arians merge the Word with the soul.

¹⁷⁵ See, e.g., Tertullian, *Prax.* 16.4 (FC 34, p. 178): *Sic etiam affectus humanos sciebat iam tunc, suscepturus etiam ipsas substantias hominis, carnem et animam*; *Prax.* 30.2 (FC 34, p. 250): *Haec vox carnis et animae, id est hominis.* On Christ’s soul in Tertullian, see R. Cantalamessa, *La Cristologia di Tertulliano* (Fribourg, 1962), pp. 88-90.

analogy to Christology. He claims that Jesus Christ ‘allied in himself [*in semetipso foederavit*]’ the spirit and the flesh as ‘a bride to her bridegroom or bridegroom to his bride’. Even though Tertullian’s aim is to argue for the resurrection of the flesh against those who posit only the immortality of the soul, he does not deny the presence of the soul either in the resurrection or the Incarnation: ‘Even if someone will contend that the soul [*animam*] is the bride [*sponsam*], the flesh will follow the soul in the name of a dowry’.¹⁷⁶ The soul, according to Tertullian, can be considered as the bride of the spirit, united in Christ.¹⁷⁷ The nuptial analogy is also brought to bear on the Incarnation by Novatian in his *De Trinitate*, in which he speaks explicitly of the *sponsa caro*, although not of the *anima sponsa*. Asserting that the ‘Word descended from heaven as a bridegroom to the flesh, in order that through the assumption of flesh the Son of Man might there ascend’, Novatian elaborates that the Word will again ascend ‘with the bride-flesh [*sponsa carne*]...whence without flesh it descended’.¹⁷⁸ Although not an exact parallel with Gregory’s language, the passage from Novatian still demonstrates the precedent that the substance which is assumed in the Incarnation can be referred to as *sponsa*. This works equally for *caro* and *anima*, which are both of the feminine gender, but cannot apply to *homo*, which is masculine.

He is not, moreover, the only fourth century Spanish author to make such a strong link between Christology and ecclesiology. In his extant homily on baptism, Pacian of Barcelona talks about the need for sinful humanity to ‘be born of Christ’, which he explains as follows: ‘In recent times, Christ took up a soul with flesh from Mary [*novissimis temporibus animam utique cum carne accepit ex Maria*]... And these are the nuptials of the Lord joined together in one flesh [*uni carne coniunctae*], so that according to that great mystery two might be joined in one flesh, Christ and the Church

¹⁷⁶ *Carn.* 63 (ed. E. Evans, p. 184): *Iesum Christum, qui et homini deum et hominem deo reddet, carni spiritum et spiritui carnem, qui utrumque iam in semetipso foederavit, sponsam sponso et sponsum sponsae comparavit. Nam et si animam quis contenderit sponsam, vel dotis nomine sequetur animam caro: non erit anima prostituta, ut nuda suscipiatur a sponso: habet instrumentum, habet cultum, habet mancipium suum carnem: ut collactanea comitabitur.*

¹⁷⁷ A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 145, notes that the ‘word *spiritus* often occurs when Tertullian wants to describe the divine nature of Christ’.

¹⁷⁸ Novatian, *Trin.* 13.68 (PL 3:907C-D): *de coelo descendit Verbum hoc, tamquam sponsus ad carnem, ut per carnis assumptionem Filius hominis illuc posset ascendere... cum sponsa carne conscendens illuc, unde sine carne descenderat.*

[*Christus et Ecclesia*]. From this union the Christian people is born [*christiana plebs nascitur*].¹⁷⁹ Pacian takes Christ's union with soul and flesh in the Incarnation on analogy with Christ's union with the Church (presumably on the basis of Eph 1:23), in which sinners are renewed and reborn in the baptismal font.¹⁸⁰ There are strong parallels Christologically and ecclesiologically. Both Gregory and Pacian refer to the pre-incarnate word as *Christus* and they emphasize that Christ assumed [*accipere*] both flesh and soul [*animam cum carne; carnem animamque*]. In terms of ecclesiology, Gregory, like Pacian, links the Christ-Church union to the begetting of Christians in baptism, 'by whose holy and inviolate union she begot a great multitude of children through the regeneration of baptism'.¹⁸¹ It is important to note that Christians do not participate in the union as the bride, as Origen exhorts them to do, but rather they are the offspring of the church, who is both mother and virgin bride. Given that Pacian and Gregory are contemporaries, it is difficult to assess whether one is reliant upon the other or whether they are both simply heirs of the same Spanish theological tradition.

(b) *Cant.* 1.20

'But what is the *chamber*, where Christ the King introduced the Queen Church, if not in the hidden place of the heavenly kingdom? For who does not know that Christ introduced *his church, that is his flesh* (Eph 1:22-3), whence he descended without flesh [*unde sine carne descenderat*], that is to the sanctuary of heaven?'¹⁸²

The soteriological content of Gregory's Christology again becomes clear in his exegesis of *Song* 1:4b. He asserts that the *cubiculum* into which the king introduces his bride is

¹⁷⁹ *De Baptismo* 6.4 (SC 410, p. 158).

¹⁸⁰ *De Baptismo* 6.3-4 (SC 410, 158): 'Thus Christ begets in the Church by his priests [*generat Christus in ecclesia per suos sacerdotes*]...And thus the seed of Christ [*Christi semen*], that is the Spirit of God, produces [*effundit*] by the hands of the priest the new man formed in the womb of the mother [*alvo matris*] and brought out by the birth of the font [*partu fontis*].

¹⁸¹ *Cant.* 1.8 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 173): *cuius sancta et inviolata coniunctione magnam filiorum multitudinem per baptismi regenerationem procreavit.*

¹⁸² *Cant.* 1.20 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 183).

the ‘mystery of the heavenly kingdom [*in caelestis regnis secretum*]’.¹⁸³ Origen, in his *Commentary*, identified the chamber as the ‘secret and hidden mind of Christ [*Christi arcanus et reconditus sensus*]’.¹⁸⁴ To come to the knowledge of the mind of Christ, Origen asserts, is to be brought into the chamber of the King – a chamber that is described as belonging to the King on account of its richness. But, for Gregory, the *cubiculum* is very much synonymous with heaven. And since the Church is the *caro Christi*, Gregory understands the introduction of the bride into the *cubiculum* as the Incarnate Christ returning ‘whence he descended without flesh’. The church is able to attain ‘the grace of the mystery of the heavenly kingdom, where all the hope of life and our salvation has been placed’ because of Christ’s embodied return to heaven.¹⁸⁵ The language of Novatian’s *De Trinitate*, which was cited above in reference to the *caro sponsa*, is clearly adopted here: *unde sine carne descenderat* is a verbatim borrowing.¹⁸⁶ This further strengthens my earlier contention that Gregory’s Christological interpretation of the Song is very much rooted in an earlier Latin theological tradition that uses the nuptial analogy to describe the relationship between the divinity and humanity in the Incarnation.

(c) *Cant.* 1.29

‘But also he said, *as the skin of Solomon*. He calls the skin of Solomon that flesh, which was darkened by the lurid sin of transgression of the old man, because Solomon worshipped the idols of the gentiles Astarte and Camos and also the grove of the idols of Sidon and others, or because he was a lover of women. Therefore, he was not able to be torn away from their flesh, because flesh had not yet been assumed by Christ [*ab earum carne revelli non poterat, quoniam necdum fuisset adsumpta*]. And since the Lord took

¹⁸³ *Cant.* 1.20 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 183).

¹⁸⁴ *Comm. In Cant.* 1.5.3 (SC 357, p. 242). In the *Homilies*, Origen is rather more vague and simply identifies it as the place in which the riches of Christ are stored.

¹⁸⁵ *Cant.* 1.21 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 183): *quam cum caelestis regni mysterii gratiam Ecclesia a Christo consequitur, ubi spes omnis vitae et salutis nostrae est posita*.

¹⁸⁶ *De Trinitate* 13.68 (CCSL 4, p. 33): *merito dum per connexionem mutuam et caro verbum Dei gerit et Filius Dei fragilitatem carnis assumit, cum sponsa carne conscendens illuc, unde sine carne descenderat*.

upon himself the *generalem summam* (cf. 2 Cor 5,21) of the human body, whence also the apostle said: *He was made sin for us* – that is, taking on the flesh of sinful humanity, which flesh the apostle has called the Church, of which *we are members* (Eph 5,30).’

This extended passage appears only in the longer recension of the second book. In the revision of his exegesis of *Song* 1:5, he sharpens the distinction between his etymological exegesis of ‘Cedar’ and ‘tents of Solomon’, the former pertaining specifically to Gentile idolatry and the idolatrous condition of the ‘old man’, which includes the Jews. Thus he expands *Cant.* 1.27 as follows: ‘It thus ought to be plain to us that she calls herself dark for this reason – either on account of the sins of her kin or the offenses of the old man, from which she takes her origin. She is beautiful, however, on account of the assumption of God and the sanctity of faith’.¹⁸⁷ Gregory emphasizes that the bride is *decora* because of the *assumptionem Dei*, a phrase that should be taken as a subjective, rather than objective, genitive. The Bride is saved because of God’s assumption of humanity in the Incarnation, which she adheres to by faith.

Gregory strengthens this claim at *Cant.* 1.29, where he asserts that Solomon was ‘not able to be torn away from the flesh of those women, since flesh had not yet been assumed’.¹⁸⁸ It is not simply the Gentiles who are darkened by the smoke of sacrifice, but all humanity participates in the condition of the ‘old man’, on account of the ‘transgression of Adam [*transgressionem Adae*]’, and humanity cannot extricate itself from the wayward desires of the body and the impulse to idol worship. This freedom is now possible because the Lord put on [*induere*] ‘the flesh of sinful humanity, which flesh the apostle has defined as the Church, of which *we are members* (Eph 5:30)’.¹⁸⁹ The soteriological significance of the Incarnation is that Christ has redeemed human flesh by bringing it into the divine life. This redemption, however, can only be realized

¹⁸⁷ *Cant.* 1.27 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 187): *Proinde manifestum nobis esse debet, hac de causa fuscam se dixisse, vel propter vitia gentilitatis vel propter veteris hominis delicta, ex cuius origine censebatur, formosam autem propter adsumptionem dei et fidei sanctitatem.*

¹⁸⁸ *Cant.* 1.29 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 189): *ab earum carne revelli non poterat, quoniam necdum fuisset adsumpta.*

¹⁸⁹ *Cant.* 1.29 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 189): *carnem hominis peccatoris induendo, quam carnem Ecclesiam esse apostolus definivit, cuius nos membra sumus.*

by the individual through their participation in the Church, precisely because it is the redeemed flesh of Christ itself: ‘This church is the flesh of Christ, through which all we believers in Christ are as members of his body, purged from the offense of the old way of life [*conversatio*], and we accept the ornament of seemliness and the beauty of dignity’.¹⁹⁰

(d) *Cant.* 2.6

‘We accept that the body of Christ itself is the *meridianum*, first because the *meridianum* is near the end, not at the end. Thus also the saviour put on a body near the end of the world. Next, although the air is temperate in the middle part, nevertheless there the heat presses more than the cold. Thus also in the flesh of Christ the substance of God and man was mixed and just as the mingling of the *midday* climate reveals the spiritual grace, nevertheless the spiritual heat works more than the carnal fragility. So then there is a mingling of God and man in that flesh, as I said, and because it was taken up near the end of the world, it is called *midday* spiritually’.¹⁹¹

He goes on to describe Christ as ‘the mediator of God and humanity (cf. *1 Tim* 2:5), who recalled (*revocavit*) God to man in grace and man to God – man, who offended with the sin of transgression – he joined in his flesh.’¹⁹² Hanson singled out this passage as one of the few examples in Gregory’s exegetical writings of continuity with the pro-Nicene Christology of the *De Fide* and as evidence of Gregory’s indebtedness to Hilary.¹⁹³ But there is nothing decidedly pro-Nicene about it, nor does it contain any statement that could not have been drawn from Tertullian or Novatian.

¹⁹⁰ *Cant.* 1.31 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 191): *Haec est ergo Ecclesia caro Christi, per quam nos omnes credentes in Christo velut membra corporis eius a delicto priscae conversationis purgati ornamentum decoris et speciem dignitatis accepimus.*

¹⁹¹ *Cant.* 2.6 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 197).

¹⁹² *Cant.* 2.7 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 197): *Ipse est enim mediator dei et hominum, qui et deum homini in gratiam revocavit et hominem deo, quem transgressionis vitio offenderat, in sua carne coniunxit.*

¹⁹³ R.P.C. Hanson, *Search*, p. 525.

Admittedly, this is the only passage in the *Tractatus* where Gregory uses *substantia*, the Latin Nicene watchword, but he here speaks of the *permixta dei et hominis substantia*, a phrase with a close parallel in the *Adversus Praxean*.¹⁹⁴ The use of *permiscere* to illustrate the relationship of the divine and human elements in the Incarnation, moreover, occurs in Novatian's *De Trinitate*: '...but we hold according to the Scriptures that he [i.e., Jesus Christ] was God, by means of the divinity of the Word having been commingled [*permixta*] in that union [*concretio*]'.¹⁹⁵ Gregory shows absolutely no interest in the relationship between the substance of the Father and the Son, but he simply wishes to illustrate that in the Incarnation there is a real union of God and humanity, which allows sinful flesh to be brought into the divine life. Christ, possessing both substances in himself, acts as mediator between the divine and the human.

As we saw in chapter two, *Song* 1:7 became one of the most cited texts of the *Song of Songs* in the late fourth century, especially in North Africa. The use of *meridie/meridiano*, which can mean 'south' as well as 'midday', in the verse provided ammunition to the Donatists for their claim that the church was uniquely pure in Africa. Indeed, the Latin interpretive tradition seems unanimous in understanding the term in its geographical rather than temporal sense, as both Gregory and Tyconius interpret the verse in this way, although neither wished to claim any special status for the African church. Gregory confidently asserts that 'the *meridianum* is without doubt Egypt and the parts of Africa since there the infancy of Christ was hidden, when Herod sought to kill him, just as it is written in the gospel'.¹⁹⁶ This identification is not made either by Hippolytus or Origen, which leaves the possibility that the Donatists knew Gregory's *Tractatus* or both were reliant upon a common source. Gregory, interestingly, identifies

¹⁹⁴ Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 29.2 (FC 34, p. 246): *Quoniam cum duae substantiae censeantur in Christo Iesu, divina et humana, constet autem immortalem esse divinam, cum mortalem quae humana sit.* Although not an exact parallel, it is certainly closer than anything to be found in Hilary.

¹⁹⁵ Novatian, *Trin.* 11 (PL 3:903C): *divinitate sermonis in ipsa concretione permixta, etiam Deum illum secundum Scripturas esse teneamus.*

¹⁹⁶ *Cant.* 2.5 (Schulz-Flügel, pp. 195-7): *Nulli quidem dubium est meridianum Aegyptum et partes Africae esse et quia illic infantia Christi detulit, quando eum Herodes quaerebat occidere, sicut in evangelio scriptum esse...*

this interpretation as the *simplex historia* of the passage.¹⁹⁷ The verse is not a figure or a type of the descent of the holy family into Egypt, but rather he understands it to be the straightforward description of a historical event in the life of Christ. It is when he interprets the verse *ad spiritalem sensum* that he discerns the Christological doctrine articulated above.

(e) *Cant.* 2.8

‘For when the one, holy, and inviolate dove – the Church – gravely feared the false teachers and corruptors of her virginity [*doctores et corruptores virginitatis*], as I have said, who are under the veil of the priesthood of God – that is, who were to come as rapacious wolves in sheep’s clothing, as the Lord said – and sought an explanation, clearly defined, of gospel truth, *where she should feed, and where rest at midday* – that is, as I have said, in the mingling of God and man [*in temperamento dei et hominis*] – lest someone through seemingly probable examples should either separate God from man or man from God [*per verisimilia exempla aut deum ab homine aut hominem a deo separaret*], then the Lord responds to her: *If you do not know yourself beautiful amongst women*, that is, if you do not understand that you are alone virgin and uncorrupted and beautiful *without spot or wrinkle* (*Eph* 5:27), and you do not exhibit such character as the Lord showed the apostle defined, *you will go out in the footsteps of the flocks*’.¹⁹⁸

This passage is particularly notable, for it is the only instance in which Gregory gives an account of the heretical Christology that he is opposing. He condemns those who deny either the human or divine element in Christ, thereby ‘separat[ing] God from man or man from God’. He appears to have either an adoptionist or docetic Christology firmly in view. As in the earlier passage, Gregory affirms that in the Incarnation there is a ‘mingling of God and man’.

¹⁹⁷ *Cant.* 2.6.

¹⁹⁸ *Cant.* 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205).

Most of this passage appears only in the longer recension, with the exception of the reference to *Eph* 5:27, which suggests that the context in which Gregory produced the second edition called for a greater emphasis upon the doctrinal purity of the church, specifically regarding Christology. But there is nothing that would indicate that Gregory's opponents are the Homoians, against whom he wrote in the *De Fide*. As we saw in the narrative above, what was contested at Sirmium and Ariminum was not the presence of divinity in Christ, but rather the kind or degree of that divinity. Left unqualified, the above passage would thus do absolutely nothing to counter the Christological error against which Gregory struggled in the two editions of his *De Fide*.

(f) *Cant.* 3.11

‘Whence the Spirit <coming from heaven> as a dove upon Christ in the Jordan reveals the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [*trinitatem patris et filii et spiritus sancti*]: the voice in the Father, the Son in Christ, and the Holy Spirit in the dove’.¹⁹⁹

This passage does not directly reveal anything about Gregory's Christology, but it is the only mention of the ‘trinity’ in the *Tractatus*. Gregory, in any event, is not a great theologian of the Trinity. It has been remarked that, save for the epilogue, his *De Fide* is essentially a binitarian work.²⁰⁰ This is entirely unsurprising given how focused theological debate was on the relationship between Father and Son until the late 360s. But it is notable that this passage would have been a perfect opportunity to assert the shared substance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and yet Gregory says nothing of the kind. The relationship of Father and pre-existent Son is simply not an issue for Gregory in the *Tractatus*.

(g) *Cant.* 3.12

¹⁹⁹ *Cant.* 3.11 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 230).

²⁰⁰ J. Fernandez Ubina, ‘La fe de Gregorio y la Sociedad de la Bética’, in *La Sociedad de la Bética: Contribuciones para su estudio* (ed. C. González Román; Granada: Universidad de Granada), p. 161.

‘These are the two things that he seeks in Christ: goodness [*bonitatem*], because he is God, since *no one*, he said, *is good except the one God* (Matt 19:17). Therefore, in order to show that he is God [*deum esse ostenderet*], he is called good. David likewise also says that he is beautiful [*speciosum*]: *beautiful above the sons of men* (Ps 44,3). He is seen to be beautiful in the resurrection, since he then had already returned to the Father’s splendour [*claritate paterna*], who before the passion is called *a man in sorrow (plaga) knowing how to endure weakness* (Is 53:3). For, Isaiah said, *we saw him and he did not have his beauty or appearance* (Is 53:2). Why did he not have his beauty or decorousness? Since, as the apostle says, *He put on the form of a servant, emptied and humbled himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross* (Phil 2:7-8). Therefore, he did not then have his beauty or decorousness, but when he was glorified [*clarificatus est*] after the resurrection, he ascended into heaven with his honour as befits his brilliance (*specie*)’.²⁰¹

This is the one passage in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* where there is a specific theological relationship with the *De Fide* and where Gregory gives some consideration to the relationship between the Son and the Father. Although Gregory does not speak about *substantia*, he does assert that Christ shares in the *claritas* of the Father. This term refers to the splendour or beauty that is proper to God the Father. The association of the divine being with light appears most prominently in the transfiguration scene in Matthew’s gospel (17:1-13), upon which Gregory draws in the *De Fide*. Commenting upon how the disciples were able to see the divine light emanating from the transfigured Christ and still live, he says that ‘as the brightness of the sun [*claritas solis*], although it does not project all the way to us, since it is unseen on account of our infirmity, whose eyes the darkness of clouds has obscured, is whole [*salva*] in itself, so too that divine majesty [*maiestas illa divina*], which as I said put on a body, shows that it did not hide its proper brightness [*proprii fulgoris*] to its detriment, but rather for the benefit of the flesh’.²⁰² There is a semantic overlap between *claritas*, *fulgor*, and *maiestas*, all of

²⁰¹ *Cant.* 3.12 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 231).

²⁰² *De Fide* 8.90 (CCSL 69, p. 244).

which denote the divine being that Christ shares with the Father and mediates to humanity.

Both passages offer an exegesis of *Phil 2:7*, explaining what precisely Christ emptied himself of in the Incarnation, although there is a significant difference between the two. In the *Tractatus*, Gregory asserts on the basis of *Is 53:2* that Christ temporarily emptied himself of the *claritas paterna* entirely, which he regained only in the resurrection. In the *De Fide*, however, he is more circumspect. The *claritas* is merely covered by the flesh – much as the sun is by a cloud – not set aside entirely: ‘his brightness is hidden, not blinded’.²⁰³ The flesh becomes a covering that filters the divine light, so that it may be safely viewed by human eyes. The *De Fide* offers a rather more satisfying theological account, for the *Tractatus* cannot adequately explain the transfiguration if Christ only regained his *claritas* at the ascension. But the passage from the *Tractatus* also seems to reflect a time in Gregory’s career before he became aware of the Arian objection that the change entailed by the Incarnation negated the possibility that Christ could be of the Father’s substance. If Christ really did put off his *claritas*, then change did occur in his divine nature when he assumed flesh. Gregory is at pains to demonstrate in the *De Fide* that the kenosis is only apparent and for the sake of fallen humanity.

3. The Christology of the *Tractatus* and its Historical Context

There emerge from this survey of the Christological passages in the *Tractatus* a few key points. Gregory is primarily concerned to demonstrate that the Incarnation is a genuine union of *deus et homo* (1.1, 6), which restored fallen human flesh by bringing it into the divine life (1.20). The flesh that Christ assumed was sinful and redeemed by union with the Word (1.29), whose spiritual power overcame the weakness of the flesh (2.6). Participation in the church is the sole means by which this redemption may be obtained, since it is the continued embodiment of the divine presence on earth (1.20, 29). Gregory shows absolutely no interest in defining the kind or degree of divinity present in the

²⁰³ *De Fide* 8.88 (CCSL 69, p. 244).

Incarnate Christ or reflecting on the relationship of the pre-existent Word/Son with the Father. His sole concern is to defend the integrity of the God-man union against the objections of the adoptionists (and, possibly, docetists), who seek to separate God from man (2.8).

The contrast between the doctrine of Christ that Gregory develops in the *Tractatus* and the anti-Homoian concerns of the Latin pro-Nicenes, in general, and his own *De Fide*, in particular, could not be more patent. As we saw in the narrative above, from the mid-350s the key debate in the Western Arian-Nicene conflict focused upon the appropriateness of confessing that the Son is of the same substance as the Father. The Sirmian manifesto was not attempting to deny the divinity of Christ, but rather to proscribe the possibility of making the Son equal to the Father. The debate was too complex to reduce it to adoptionist terms. Hilary made no attempt to do so in his *De Synodis*, nor did Gregory in the *De Fide*. The sole bulwark against Eusebian and Homoian theology in the West was the Nicene creed. Liberius claimed it as a normative definition of the catholic faith in his letter to Constantius of 353; Eusebius of Vercelli invoked it at the synod of Milan in 355; Hilary promoted it in his *Against Valens and Ursacius*; the bishops at Ariminum initially resolved that it was the only creed necessary; and Gregory cited it at the opening of his *De Fide* and launched an impassioned defense of the *homoousion* that runs throughout the work. The absolute lack of reference to the creed and the silence on the question of the relationship between Son and Father in the Christological sections of the *Tractatus* – particularly the pointedly polemical statement at *Cant.* 2.8 – make it virtually impossible that the text is responding to Homoian theology.

Hilary similarly offers a defense of the full humanity and divinity of Christ in the ninth book of his *De Trinitate*, but the subtlety and nuance with which he qualifies this assertion suggest an entirely different context. The true divinity and true humanity of Christ is the only basis on which Christ can be ‘mediator between God and men [*inter Deum et homines mediatoris*]’.²⁰⁴ Hilary accuses his opponents of confessing Christ to be God ‘in name [*nomine*]’ and not ‘in nature [*natura*]’, and of placing him ‘outside the

²⁰⁴ Hilary, *Trin.* 9.3 (CCSL 72A, p. 374).

proper nature of the true God [*extra proprietatem veri Dei*].²⁰⁵ It is perilous, he says, to ‘deny that Jesus Christ is either God the Spirit or the flesh of our body [*Christum Iesum vel Spiritum Deum, vel carnem nostri corporis denegare*].’²⁰⁶ To explain the relationship of the divine and human elements in Christ, Hilary advances the doctrine of two *naturae* united in one *res* – that is, one acting subject – which is in turn built on the confession of the ‘indistinguishable nature of God the Father and God the Son...[which] demonstrates not a solitary God but a unity of undivided divinity according to the generation [of the Son]’. The soteriological efficacy of Hilary’s Christ rests on his being *verus deus et verus homo* (not simply *deus et homo*), with the understanding that in his divine *natura* he is ‘all that God is’. The defense of the full divinity of Christ in the latter books of the *De Trinitate* – much as it is in the latter sections of Gregory’s own *De Fide* – is predicated on the robust defense of the full divinity of the pre-existent Son that precedes it, and the Trinitarian concerns are never left fully behind.

Gregory’s vigorous, yet rather simplistic, defense of the full humanity and divinity of the Incarnate Christ, however, makes perfect sense if we date it to the late 340s or early 350s. As we saw above, leading up to and during this period Ursacius and Valens had been spreading their doctrines and, indeed, Valens had even made an attempt to claim the see of Aquileia. They had confirmed allies in North Africa, Italy, and Dalmatia, and there were likely others – perhaps in the Pannoniae – as well. But there was also the modalism and adoptionism of Photinus, with which Western bishops had to contend. And, from 350 onwards, it was becoming clear that Constantius intended the whole church to sign up to Eusebian theology. These were serious threats to doctrinal orthodoxy. By leaving the specifics of his Christology vague and only affirming the humanity and divinity of Christ, Gregory may have hoped to target what he perceived to be the deficiency in both heresies. His lack of specifics may also indicate a lack of concrete information about what, in precise detail, Ursacius and Valens and their Eastern colleagues were teaching. With only fragmentary information about the nature of the conflict available – learned, perhaps, from the Serdican encyclical or from bits of

²⁰⁵ Hilary, *Trin.* 9.2 (CCSL 72A, p. 372).

²⁰⁶ Hilary, *Trin.* 9.3 (CCSL 72A, p. 373).

information disseminated by Ossius – Gregory could not have had much of a firm grasp on the issues, save for the fact that Christ’s divinity was being disputed. This would be particularly true if he were familiar with the charge that Ursacius and Valens attributed the suffering to the Word, thereby undermining its full divinity; the humanity, too, would be compromised without the attribution of a human soul. Indeed, this may explain Gregory’s desire to emphasize the existence of a human soul in Christ apart from the Word. What perhaps tells most in favour of this hypothesis is the utter lack of any specifically Nicene terminology. Before the mid-350s, the Nicene creed played little, if indeed any, role in anti-Arian theology. It was Liberius, Hilary, Eusebius of Vercelli and others who made it the cornerstone of Western orthodoxy.

Another of Gregory’s homilies – the *De Salomone* – I believe gives further support to this theory. The homily is an exposition of *Prov* 30:19, in which Solomon proposes four things that cannot be known: ‘The tracks of eagles, the ways of serpents upon the rock, the paths of sailing ships, and the ways of men in their youth’.²⁰⁷ For Gregory, this passage points to hidden truths that are ‘reserved for their proper times [*suis sunt temporibus reservata*]’ and have been brought to light after the coming of Jesus Christ, because ‘nothing is hidden that will not be revealed [*nihil est occultum, quod non reveletur*]’ (*Apoc* 5:1).²⁰⁸ The eagle is Christ, who after the resurrection ‘soared again to his father as an eagle [*velut aquila revolavit ad patrem*]’.²⁰⁹ A bird also protects its young, and Christ protects the church from the serpent – that is, the devil – whom he devoured.²¹⁰ Christ conquered the devil when he ‘assumed a human body [*humanum sibi corpus assumit*]’ and ‘became sin for us [*pro nobis peccatum fuit*]’ (*2 Cor* 5:21).²¹¹ Gregory emphasizes that it is a mystery and ‘cannot be explained in what way such majesty [*maiestas*] deigned to come down from heaven and then return’.²¹²

²⁰⁷ *Sal.* 1.1 (CCSL 69, p. 253): *Vesitigia aquilae volantis, vias serpentis super petram, et semitas navis navigantis, et vias viri in iuventute.*

²⁰⁸ *Sal.* 3.6 (CCSL 69, p. 254).

²⁰⁹ *Sal.* 5.11 (CCSL 69, p. 255).

²¹⁰ *Sal.* 6.13-7.15 (CCSL 69, p. 255).

²¹¹ *Sal.* 7.15 (CCSL 69, p. 255).

²¹² *Sal.* 8.17 (CCSL 69, p. 256): *ut explicare possit, quomodo illa tanta maiestas de caelo aut venire dignata fuerat aut redire?*

Christ is thus the subject of the first two clauses of the passage, which signify his descent from heaven, assumption of sinful flesh, conquering of Satan, and his return in glory to heaven. The subject of the third clause, however, is the church, which is the ship navigating the perilous world.²¹³ The perils the church faces are heresies, and Gregory's heresiological account is worth quoting at length:

Whence there resounds the barking of a false song in the caves of Montanus, who is girded about with his two female prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, as with the rabid dogs of a certain Scylla. In this ship of the church we happily pass by, whence we are not drawn into the Photinian Charybdis, whence in no way we fall into that abyss as did Dathan and Abiron – that is, into the depths of death of Ursacius and Valens. Whence we do not fear the archpirate Arius, who follows us through the sea of the world after the likeness of Pharoah...²¹⁴

Gregory goes on to condemn Marcion and the 'pirate Sabellius'. What is particularly notable about this piece of heresiology is the utter confusion it evidences and lack of detail it provides. He passes up the excellent opportunity to make Photinus Charybdis to the Scylla of Ursacius and Valens (a far more coherent account of the two extremes to be avoided), identifying Scylla with Montanus instead. Moreover, Ursacius and Valens are not linked with Arius. Sabellius and Marcion are simply tacked on at the end. There is no attempt to construct a genealogy of error or even to identify what any of the named individuals taught. I would argue that the best explanation for this rather incoherent heresiology is that Gregory himself did not yet have a firm grasp of how all the pieces fit together (or, at the very least, did not believe his congregation would). Certainly, he knew the names of Photinus, Arius, Ursacius, and Valens and that they were influential heretics to be shunned, but there is no evidence he had a clear grasp of the relationship of their theologies.

Significantly, the Christology that he advances against these heretics is extremely close to that which he offers in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. In both treatises, Gregory is concerned only with the Incarnate Christ; he makes no allusion to the Nicene creed; he

²¹³ *Sal.* 11.25 (CCSL 69, p. 256): *Navem adaeque ecclesiam debemus accipere in salo mundi istius constitutam.*

²¹⁴ *Sal.* 12.27-8 (CCSL 69, p. 257): *Inde Montani antra latratu falsi carminis resonant, qui duabus feminis prophetissis, Priscillae et Maximillae, tamquam alicuius Scyllae rabidis succinctus est canibus. In ista nave ecclesiae ea feliciter praeterimus, inde in Photiniam Charybdim non incidimus, inde nullo modo in illud barathrum quasi Dathan et Abiro, id est in profundum mortis Ursacii et Valentis non incurrimus. Inde Arium archipiratam, qui nos per mare saeculi ad instar Pharaonis insequitur, non timemus...*

asserts that humanity's sins are redeemed through Christ's assumption of sinful flesh; and he emphasizes the dual movement of Christ's descent from heaven and his ascension following the resurrection, which is the firstfruits of the resurrection of all believers. The *De Salomone* may, therefore, be another piece of evidence supporting my contention that the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* dates to the late 340s or early 350s, when Gregory knew of and was concerned by theological disputes raging farther east, but lacked the resources to grasp the key issues and mount a satisfactory response, as he later would in the *De Fide*.

The case for such an early date is ultimately conjectural and it cannot be proven beyond doubt. What is not, however, conjectural is the utter lack of any pro-Nicene vocabulary or theological concerns in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. Neither E.A. Matter nor N. Henry can thus be correct that the text demonstrates Gregory's rabidly pro-Nicene sentiments and is in any sense continuous with the *De Fide*.

III. THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE *TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO*

It is tempting to read the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* as a rigorist response to the lenient approach towards lapsed bishops that was adopted at synods in Alexandria, Greece, Gaul, Spain, and elsewhere. Gregory depicts the church as 'purged of every spot or wrinkle and made ruddy by the blood of Christ, just as the apostle said: *In order that he might present to himself a church not having spot or wrinkle (Eph 5:27)* – that is, no spot of offense, no wrinkle of perverse doctrine'.²¹⁵ He calls the church 'the one, holy, and inviolate dove [*sancta et inviolata simplex columba*]',²¹⁶ and he exhorts her to remain 'pure and inviolate without any taint of duplicity [*sine aliquo circumventionis fuco pura et inviolata*]',²¹⁷ and a 'virgin in doctrine, incorruptible in faith, beautiful in good works

²¹⁵ *Cant.* 1.26 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 187): *iam ab omni macula vel ruga purgata, iam Christi sanguine rubicunda – sicut apostolus ait: ut exhibeat sibi Ecclesiam non habentem maculam vel rugam, hoc est nullam maculam delicti, nullam rugam perversae doctrinae*. This passage appears only in the longer recension.

²¹⁶ *Cant.* 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205). Only in the longer recension.

²¹⁷ *Cant.* 2.13 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 203).

[*virginem in doctrina, incorruptam in fide, speciosam in bonis operibus*].²¹⁸ The church must be wary of the ‘prevarication of false priests [*praevaricationem falsorum sacerdotum*].’²¹⁹ and ‘heretics who devour the people of Christ [*haeretici qui devorarent plebes Christi*].’²²⁰ Certainly one can see how he might take issue with the readmission to communion of those stained by participation in heresy.

Two recent studies illustrate the point. E.A. Matter asserts that Gregory offers a ‘virtually complete elaboration of the Song of Songs as an allegory of the immediate tribulations of institutional Christianity’ – specifically ‘the struggle between Arian and Nicene Christians’.²²¹ She does acknowledge that in the *Tractatus* Gregory constructs an ‘antithesis...between Judaism and Christianity’, but that it is ‘*Christians* who wander and lead others astray that most exercise him’.²²² N. Henry follows Matter in discerning within the *Tractatus* a rigorist approach to the problem of lapsed clergy.²²³ She, however, sees Gregory’s ecclesiological rigorism manifest not only in his desire for doctrinal purity, but also sexual and moral purity more broadly. Gregory, she argues, forges a strong link between ‘sexual purity (freedom from lust) and doctrinal purity’.²²⁴ This rigorist approach, she argues, is due to Gregory’s Andalusian upbringing, where he would have encountered the strict approach to transgression and penance that is outlined in the canons of the council of Elvira.

But beginning one’s analysis with such *a priori* assumptions about the nature and degree of Gregory’s rigorist ecclesiology in the *Tractatus* – as both Matter and Henry do – leads to interpretive problems. I have already demonstrated the difficulty in depicting the Christology of the *Tractatus* as in any meaningful sense pro-Nicene. Likewise, there are significant problems in connecting the text’s ecclesiology with the fallout from Ariminum and with a rather hazy picture of moral rigorism that supposedly marked Baetica in the fourth century.

²¹⁸ *Cant.* 2.17 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 207).

²¹⁹ *Cant.* 2.13 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 203).

²²⁰ *Cant.* 2.14 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 203).

²²¹ Matter, *Voice*, p. 89.

²²² Matter, *Voice*, p. 88, italics in original.

²²³ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, pp. 71-9.

²²⁴ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 80.

First and foremost among the problems is that the rigorist sentiments in the *Tractatus* are connected with particular verses of the *Song*. They appear to reflect received exegetical tradition rather than a systematic attempt on Gregory's part to impose a thoroughly rigorist vision of the church on the text. The most glaring example is Gregory's description of the church as a pure and inviolate virgin, which Henry claims is one of the central themes of the work.²²⁵ It is, however, far from central; rather, it is the content of Gregory's exegesis of *Song* 1:7-8. The bride's fear that she 'become as veiled' represents for Gregory the church's fear of being deceived by heretics; the bridegroom's exhortation, moreover, that she 'know herself to be beautiful among women', is Christ's command to the church that she remain virgin in doctrine.²²⁶ It is, admittedly, a lengthy piece of exegesis that dominates the second book and is clearly an important issue for Gregory, but it is nonetheless notable that the church is described as *virgo* elsewhere only at *Cant.* 1.4.²²⁷ Another example is Gregory's anti-heretical exegesis of *Song* 2:15, in which the 'little foxes destroying the vines [*vulpes pusillas exterminantes vineas*']' signifies the heretics who corrupt the 'people of the saints [*plebes sanctorum*']'.²²⁸ He goes on to state that the foxes are called 'little [*pusillas*]', because the greater ones [*maiores*] are the 'princes, rulers of the people [*principes, gentium potestates*]', who are seduced by and promulgate heretical doctrines.²²⁹ In this interpretation, Matter believes, Gregory makes clear his 'particular concern for the purity of the church...perhaps even dangerously clear'.²³⁰ But Gregory, in identifying the foxes as heretics, is simply following an exegetical tradition begun by Origen.²³¹ He does, it is true, innovate in differentiating between 'little foxes' and 'foxes' – the former

²²⁵ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 63.

²²⁶ *Cant.* 2.8-23.

²²⁷ There are only three other uses of *virgo* in the entire work. Two are used to describe Mary, the mother of Jesus (*Cant.* 1.7, 3.8); one refers to actual virgins [*virgines*], who, along with confessors, are like 'precious stones' (*Cant.* 2.39).

²²⁸ *Cant.* 4.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 247).

²²⁹ *Cant.* 4.25 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 247).

²³⁰ Matter, *Voice*, p. 89.

²³¹ *Comm. In Cant.* 4.3.8-10 (SC 376, p. 725). That is the ecclesiological interpretation of the poem. When Origen gives his psychological interpretation, the foxes are demons (4.3.2-6).

being heretics and the latter secular *principes*.²³² But it is entirely unclear how Gregory's exegesis is in any way more 'dangerous' or 'rigorist' than Origen's, which Matter elsewhere lauds as quite moderate.²³³ Taken as a whole, the work does not appear excessively preoccupied with heresy or purity, although I noted in chapter three that the longer recension does have a decidedly rigorist bent.

The second problem pertains to the actual concerns that Gregory expresses about the church's purity. Although Gregory does have a strong commitment to the purity of the church, he nowhere discusses the problem of the lapsed – especially lapsed clergy. Indeed, his concern is not with the problem of those clergy who have publicly fallen and are seeking restoration to communion; rather, he is far more worried by the presence of 'pseudoapostles' and 'false priests', who masquerade as sheep but are in fact 'rapacious wolves'.²³⁴ His comments suggest a context in which presbyters and/or bishops in good standing are promoting doctrines that Gregory perceived as inimical to the orthodox faith, but are nonetheless being well-received, or at least gaining some currency. One wonders how a bishop could be described as a 'sheep in wolves' clothing' if he had earlier openly subscribed to a creed that was now widely acknowledged as heretical. It is far more likely that Gregory has in mind well-regarded clergy who are holding Christologies that he finds to be decidedly unorthodox.

The third problem lies in making assumptions about Gregory's ecclesiology based upon a broad and ill-defined cultural attitude towards transgression and penance. Indeed, resting one's case, even partially, on the synod of Elvira is a problematic move. The date of the synod has been widely disputed – proposals from 300 to 324 have all been advanced – although it seems likely to have met sometime between 300 and 303.²³⁵

²³² We certainly need not date the text after Ariminum, however. Constantius was as involved in ecclesiastical politics in the 340s as he was in the late 350s, and if he were still living this would be incentive not to name him directly.

²³³ Matter, *Voice*, p. 88.

²³⁴ *Cant.* 2.11 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 201): *multos pseudoapostolos et circumventores*; 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205): *doctores et corruptores virginitatis...sub velamine sacerdotum dei*.

²³⁵ For a history of the debate, see De clerq, *Ossius*, pp. 87-103. De clerq himself favoured, with L. Duschene (*Mélanges Renier* [Paris, 1887], 159ff), a date before the persecution of Diocletian. S. Laeuchli has argued for a date of 309, based on the fact that some canons 'suggest a Spanish church in peace but there are other canons which definitely point toward a preceding persecution' (*Power and Sexuality*, pp. 86-7, n. 65). He thinks rather more time than one or two years has elapsed since the end of the

We thus have to posit a gulf of some forty years between the enactment of the canons of Elvira and the composition of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. We simply do not have adequate evidence that demonstrates the extent to which the canons continued to affect the church in Baetica. As S. Laeuchli has argued, the canons ‘were not static legal formulations, but end products of violent group clashes, the last verbalized stage in a series of events’.²³⁶ It is impossible to ascertain how rigorously they were enforced in the early decades of the fourth century, let alone in the 350s.²³⁷ Their value lies primarily in reflecting the collective fears and values of a group of Romanized Christians, who were dealing with the problem of Christian-pagan syncretism – whether coerced or not (e.g., *Can.* 1-3), shifting sexual mores (e.g., *Can.* 8-10, 12-14, 18-20), and intermarriage (e.g., *Can.* 15-17). Even then, Laeuchli argues that the canons do not represent the ‘monolithic opinion’ of a group of bishops, but rather competing opinions on the appropriate discipline to be meted out for a particular sin.²³⁸

It is the case that, on the whole, the canons do adopt a rigid and generally unforgiving approach to sin. The phrase *nec in finem dandam esse communionem* (or a variant thereof) appears at the end of many canons (*Can.* 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18). The sins that are deemed so heinous that the offender cannot receive communion even at the point of death are pagan sacrifice (if one has been baptized), sorcery, marrying one’s daughter to a pagan priest, and sexual transgressions. The latter category includes fornication (7), a woman divorcing her husband and sleeping with other men (8), female

persecution, leading him to favour 309 over 306, which was proposed by H. Koch, ‘Die Zeit des Konzils von Elvira’ *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 17 (1916), pp. 61-7. H. Hess, *Early Development*, p. 42, favours Laeuchli’s proposal. But Laeuchli does not manage to demonstrate which canons actually indicate this ‘preceding persecution’. I thus follow Duschene, and, more recently, Barnes, *Eusebius and Constantine*, p. 314, n. 108 and J. Richardson, *The Romans in Spain*, p. 281.

²³⁶ Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality*, p. 4.

²³⁷ Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality*, p. 57: ‘In the canons of Elvira a group of bishops and presbyters, acting as a new provincial elite, heaped threat upon threat on all sorts of people in the Christian fold. Did these threats work? We do not know. Were they actually carried out? We do not know that either’.

²³⁸ Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality*, p. 4. He contrasts *Can.* 13, 18, and 19. In *Can.* 13, virgins are suspended from communion if they transgress sexually, but they may be readmitted *in finem*. In *Can.* 18, however, presbyters and bishops are suspended if they transgress sexually, and they will not be readmitted *in finem*. One may suppose that clergy are held to a higher standard than women, but in *Can.* 19 no punishment whatsoever is mandated for clergy who abandon their dioceses for commercial reasons. He concludes, ‘In their syntactical rhythm the canons sound certain, but their discrepancies betray the council’s uncertainty’ (p. 8).

prostitution (12), or any sexual dalliance by a virgin (13) or clergy (17).²³⁹ S. Parvis has noted that when compared with the canons of the near-contemporary synod of Ancrya (314), those of Elvira are ‘rather more severe, often a great deal more severe’.²⁴⁰ We may thus cautiously ascribe a generally more rigorist attitude towards sin and transgression in the south of Spain that likely persisted for decades; to do more than this would be unwise. Henry, for example, against the backdrop of the council of Elvira, asserts that Gregory was ‘very inclined to asceticism’ and that such a commitment to bodily purity is patently manifest in the *Tractatus*;²⁴¹ she can, however, only produce three passages in support of this, and even there the ascetic agenda is only hinted at.²⁴²

Bearing these caveats in mind, we must begin with the text itself, considering the way in which Gregory constructs his doctrine of the church throughout the *Tractatus*. Only with such an analysis in place can we make observations about the likely historical and theological context that undergirds his account. We shall undertake our study of the ecclesiology of the *Tractatus* in two stages: first we shall consider Gregory’s account of the origins of the church, namely its supersession of the synagogue and gathering together of faithful gentiles; secondly, we shall consider his account of the life of the church on earth, as it strives against Jews and heretics.

1. The Origins of the Church

(a) Inheriting the law and the prophets, disinheriting the Jews

Gregory’s ecclesiology is fundamentally shaped by his conception of the church as the *caro Christi*. *Ephesians* 1:22-3, the biblical text in which this understanding is rooted, is the most cited verse in the *Tractatus*, occurring eight times and appearing at least once in every book except the second (1.7, 20; 3.7, 11, 29; 4.11-2; 5.12). Gregory does not

²³⁹ I follow the Latin text of Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* I, 1, pp. 221-63.

²⁴⁰ Parvis, *Marcellus*, p. 27. She notes in particular that women are treated much more harshly than men in the Elviran canons.

²⁴¹ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 80.

²⁴² Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, pp. 79-84.

invoke this identification simply to demonstrate the continuing existence of the divine presence in the community of Christian believers; more specifically, he believes there to be a direct continuity between the assumed and deified flesh of Christ and the church.

The church, therefore, has its origins in the Incarnation; it did not exist, at least in any concrete sense, prior to that moment. Gregory articulates this point early on in the *Tractatus*: ‘For from that time because Christ the Son of God deigned to come as man and took up the flesh and soul of man as a spouse, the law and the prophets ceased’.²⁴³ The coming of Christ in the Incarnation represents the ending of one dispensation – that of Israel or the synagogue – and the inauguration of another – that of the church. Gregory posits a clear ontological distinction between *lex* and *gratia* – between the indirect mediation of the law and the direct mediation of Christ. The church represents an entirely new way in which God relates to humanity.

Gregory develops this point at length in his exegesis of *Song* 1:2b-4a, in which he presents a series of contrasts between the Old and New dispensations. He begins with *Song* 1:2b – ‘your breasts are better than wine’ – although he does not do as we might expect and identify the breasts, which are better, exclusively with the gospel and the wine exclusively with the law. He begins by referring to the *prisca lex* as having *duo ubera*, ‘impressed upon two stone tablets by the finger of God’.²⁴⁴ The new dispensation is superior, however, because ‘the breasts of the Lord are not two, but we understand that they are four. For the fonts of the four gospels confer the sweet milk of wisdom upon the believers’.²⁴⁵ In the same way that the breasts of the new dispensation are superior to those of the old, so too is the wine. Gregory gives an allegorical reading of *John* 2, the account of the wedding at Cana, identifying the law with the wine that ‘ran out [*defecit*] at the wedding in Cana of Galilee’ and the gospel with that which ‘has

²⁴³ *Cant.* 1.6 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 169): *Nam ex eo quod Christus filius dei secundum hominem venire dignatus est et carnem animamque hominis velut sponsam accipere, lex et prophetae cessaverunt.* He then cites *Luke* 16:16 and *John* 1:17.

²⁴⁴ *Cant.* 1.9 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 173): *Habuit quidem prisca lex duo ubera ex duabus tabulis lapideis, quae digito dei impressa.*

²⁴⁵ *Cant.* 1.9 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 173-5): *Sed nunc ubera domini iam non duo, sed quattuor cognovimus. Quattuor enim evangeliorum fontes dulce lac sapientiae credentibus tribuunt.*

been made by the word of God [*verbo dei*] from water'.²⁴⁶ He finds further support for this in the parable of the wineskins (cf. *Mark* 2:22), which he relates (somewhat tortuously) to the Incarnation: 'Whence our saviour has said *It is right to carry new wine in new skins*, which signified the marriage of Christ and the Church, that is, when the Word of God coupled [*copulavit*] with the soul of man'.²⁴⁷ Gregory's interest here is not primarily Christological – the language of container/contained would verge on Docetism if pushed too far – but ecclesiological, because he wishes to emphasize, as he did in his interpretation of *Cant* 1:2a, the covenantal break effected by the Incarnation. He asserts that 'the wine, that is of the old law and prophets, was about to cease, and the other wine of the gospel was about to begin out of the water of baptism'.²⁴⁸

Gregory's exposition of this passage can be traced back to the *Commentary* – although not the *Homilies* – of Origen. The Alexandrian identifies the wine as the *dogmata et doctrinae* that are taught *per legem et prophetas* and the breasts as the *principalis cordis* of Jesus, in which 'the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...are hidden in Christ [*reconditi erant in Christo*']'.²⁴⁹ Although Origen explicitly links the wine with the 'law and the prophets' as does Gregory, he deliberately (and, in the light of our conclusions in chapter four, unsurprisingly) resists identifying the breasts with the gospels, choosing instead to depict them as the ground of Christ's heart and the font of his teachings. Origen's *Commentary* is also the likely original source for Gregory's supersessionist exegesis of *John* 2. This passage serves as the first in a list of scriptural passages that Origen provides which further demonstrate that Christ's 'teaching surpasses that of old'.²⁵⁰ When the wine at Cana 'failed [*deficiente*]', Christ made

²⁴⁶ *Cant.* 1.10 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 175): *Duo etenim genera vini in scripturis caelestibus legimus, unum, quod apud Canaam Galilaeae defecit ad nuptias, aliud, quod multo melius verbo dei de aqua est factum.* It is possible that this interpretation of *John* 2 was conditioned by his reading of *Gen* 21:14-16, in which he identified that water from the well that 'ran out [*defecit*]' with the *legis littera* (cf. *Tract.* 2.20).

²⁴⁷ *Cant.* 1.11 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 175): *Unde et salvator dicebat vinum novum in utres novos mitti oportere. Quod quidem significabat nuptias Christi et Ecclesiae, id est quando verbum dei anima hominis copulavit.*

²⁴⁸ *Cant.* 1.11 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 175): *cessaturum esset vinum, id est priscae legis et prophetiae, et aliud evangelicum ex baptismatis aqua futurum.*

²⁴⁹ *Comm. In Cant.* 1.2.1ff (SC 375, pp. 190ff). On Origen's interpretation of the breasts of the bridegroom, see Peter Widdicombe, 'Knowing God: Origen and the Example of the Beloved Disciple', *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997), pp. 554-9.

²⁵⁰ *Comm. in Cant.* 1.2.12 (SC 375, p. 198): *In quantum ergo doctrina haec eius illam praecellit antiquam.*

‘another wine [*aliud vinum*]’ that was ‘greatly superior [*multo praestantius*]’.²⁵¹ There is, however, no connection with the Markan parable. Hippolytus does make a direct link between the breasts and the gospels, although in a different way from Gregory. He identifies the law and the gospel [*lege et evangelio*] as the two breasts from which the Church is nourished.²⁵²

Turning to *Song* 1:3 – ‘*And the odour of your unguents is above all spices. Your name is an unguent poured/emptied out*’ – Gregory continues his contrasting of the two dispensations through a focus on the anointing of Christ. The synagogue, he asserts, had its anointing [*unctionem*] with ‘fragrant unguents [*de unguentis odoriferis*]’ but the ‘unguent of Christ descends from the sweetness of the Holy Spirit [*ex sancti spiritus suavitate*]’.²⁵³ It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that gives Christ his sweet odour, which, as Gregory indicated above with the Pauline citation, is passed on to those souls which he has turned from water into wine through the ‘grace of the sacred chrism [*sacrosancti chrismatis*]’.²⁵⁴ Gregory’s debt again appears to be to the *Commentary* of Origen and not Hippolytus’ *Sermo*. Hippolytus claims that the unguent is the Word: ‘Since just as the mixtures of incense give off an aroma, thus also the Word going out from the Father rejoices its hearers’.²⁵⁵ This very much accords with Hippolytus’ two-stage Christology – the *logos asarkos* and *logos ensarkos* – in which the Word first exists in the Father and then proceeds outwards in a kind of birth where it is united with the flesh born to Mary and becomes ‘perfect Son’.²⁵⁶ Origen, however, clearly identifies the unguent as the Holy Spirit.²⁵⁷ It is only through the Holy Spirit’s anointing that the ‘material substance [*materialis substantia*]’ that ‘was assumed in Christ [*in Christo*

²⁵¹ *Comm. In Cant.* 1.2.13 (SC 375, p. 198).

²⁵² *Sermo* 2.3 (CSCO 264, p. 26): *Quia sicut infantes qui exsugent ex uberibus ad-exsugendum lac, ita etiam omnes (qui) exsugent e lege et evangelio mandata cibum sempiternum acquirunt.*

²⁵³ *Cant.* 1.13 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 177).

²⁵⁴ *Cant.* 1.13 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 177). Schulz-Flügel’s edition reads *istius sacrosanctam chrismatis gratiam*, with *sacrosanctam* in the accusative agreeing with *gratiam*. The majority of manuscripts do attest this reading, but A and R both have *sacrosancti*, which seems the better reading, given that Gregory usually qualifies *chrisma* with an adjective, but does not do so with *gratia* (e.g., later in 1.13).

²⁵⁵ *Sermo* 2.4 (CSCO 264, p. 26): *Quia sicut permixtiones incensorum emittunt aroma, ita etiam verbum egressum e Patre laetificat auditores.*

²⁵⁶ See A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 136-7 and the references provided therein.

²⁵⁷ *Comm. In Cant.* 1.3.11 (SC 375, p. 214): *Istud autem oleum, id est sancti Spiritus unguentum, quo unctus est Christus et cuius nunc odorem sponsa percipiens admirata est.*

fueraut assumpta'] could be made into 'one kind, which is the person of the mediator [*in unam speciem, quae est persona mediatoris effecta*]',²⁵⁸ For Gregory, though, the anointing with the Spirit has little to do with the doctrine of Christ and more to do with the superiority of the Church over the synagogue: 'He thus reveals that this odour of unguents – the grace of the spiritual chrism – is better than all the spices of the Old Testament'.²⁵⁹ It is the same Holy Spirit who anointed Christ at his baptism in the Jordan who, through the oil, sanctifies Christians that pass through the waters of baptism. It is the Spirit who mediates Christ's saving work to each believer in the sacramental life of the church.²⁶⁰

Gregory offers two different interpretations of the second half of *Song* 1:3 because some codices have *exinanitum* and others *diffusum*, although only in the first does he continue his contrasting of the synagogue and church. He says that the bridegroom's name – *Christus* – has been 'emptied out [*exinanitum*]' because 'the name of those kings who were called christs has been emptied out, lest they be further esteemed for this title, because the true name of Christ endures, which has been poured out from the true unguent – that is, from the fullness of the Holy Spirit'.²⁶¹ The imagery of anointing is again persistent. *Reges et sacerdotes* under the *prisca lex* were called christs on account of 'the likeness of the oil of the chrism', but they were 'more a shadow than the truth of the name of Christ [*umbra potius quam veritate Christi nominis*]',²⁶² Their anointing, with inferior oil, prefigures Christ's anointing from the Holy Spirit, which is spread throughout the world and re-enacted in the Christian life through baptism. Again, he emphasizes the radical break the Incarnation effects: 'From

²⁵⁸ *Comm. In Cant.* 1.3.10 (SC 375, p. 214).

²⁵⁹ *Cant.* 1.13 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 177): *Et ideo hunc odorem unguenti, id est chrismatum spiritualium gratia, super omnia aromata veteris testamenti meliorem esse designat.*

²⁶⁰ Gregory makes a similar point in the twentieth *tractatus* when he is trying to explain why the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ at his baptism if he had already descended upon the virgin (cf. *Tract.* 20.9). See esp. *Tract.* 20.12-13 (CCSL 69, p. 144): *Et ideo tota plenitudo sancti spiritus in Christo adventi, quia ipse est corpus integrum totius ecclesiae...Hic est, inquam, spiritus qui operatur ex aqua secundum nativitatem, semen quodam divini generis et consecratur caelestis nativitatis.*

²⁶¹ *Cant.* 1.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 178): *exinanitum est nomen eorum regum, qui christi dicebantur, ne ulterius hoc vocabulo censerentur. Et verum permanet nomen Christi, quod ex vero unguento, id est sancti spiritus plenitudine est effusum.* This is only in the shorter recension. The longer recension reads: *exinanivit et evacuavit adumbratum nomen eorum regum, qui Christi imaginaliter dicebantur.*

²⁶² *Cant.* 1.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 179).

the time when this true Christ came [*verus Christus advenit*] whose good odour became known in the world, no king or priest has been called Christ [*nemo ex eo rex vel sacerdos christus est appellatus*].²⁶³ For ‘poured out [*diffusum*]’, Gregory asserts that the ‘sweetest grace of the true name of Christ was poured out upon the believers (cf. Rom 5:5) and the good odour of his knowledge (2 Cor 2:14) upon all the faithful’.²⁶⁴ The idea that the name of Christ is ‘poured out upon believers’ connects this verse to the work of the Holy Spirit, which Gregory seems continuously to emphasize in these passages.

There are few clear parallels for either of the two interpretations. No other commentator contrasts the ‘christs’ of the *prisca lex* with the *verus Christus*. In his *Homilies*, Origen does interpret the pouring out of the unguent as the spreading of the knowledge of Jesus’ name throughout the world, which may partly serve as the basis for Gregory’s exegesis of *diffusum*.²⁶⁵ In the *Commentary*, however, the emptying out is taken to refer specifically to the moment of the Incarnation, on the basis of *Philippians* 2:7: ‘He who was in the form of God emptied himself, in order that his name might be an unguent emptied out’.²⁶⁶ Hippolytus, too, follows very much this same line, where the pouring forth of the unguent is taken to represent the Word’s going forth from the ‘heart of the Father’ in the Incarnation, by which he fills the entire world with his fragrance.²⁶⁷ But there is still something of the Spirit in Hippolytus’ interpretation of the *unguentum exinanitum*, for he asserts that it was ‘from this unguent...the blessed virgin Mary conceived the Word’.²⁶⁸

The ‘young women’ of *Song* 1:3-4a who love Christ and wish to be drawn after him are, for Gregory, the ‘young plebs, whom Christ has recently assembled from the

²⁶³ *Cant.* 1.16 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 179). This sentence is only in the longer recension.

²⁶⁴ *Cant.* 1.16 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 179): *suavissima veri Christi nominis gratia super omnes credentes diffusa est et bonum odorem notitiae suae fidelibus cunctis effunderit.*

²⁶⁵ *Hom. In Cant.* 1.4 (SC 37bis, pp. 67-8)

²⁶⁶ *Comm. In Cant.* 1.4.4 (SC 375, p. 222): *exinanivit se ille qui erat in forma Dei, ut fieret unguentum exinanitum nomen eius.*

²⁶⁷ *Sermo* 2.5 (CSCO 264, p. 27): *ita etiam verbum in-corde Patris, et dum nondum erat egressum, neminem in-ulla laetificabat, quando autem emisit Pater spiritum aromatis, diffudit verbum laetificatione omnibus.*

²⁶⁸ *Sermo* 2.28 (CSCO 264, p. 29): *De hoc unguento...beata virgo Maria verbum concipiebat.*

Gentiles'.²⁶⁹ They, who 'love and follow Christ with a trustworthy love', are to be distinguished from the plebs of the synagogue, who 'live according to the old man...[and] rejected *Christ the wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1:24)'. Gregory strengthens his anti-Jewish polemic in the longer recension, by adding a section emphasizing that although these 'young women' – the Gentile believers – were recently called, when Christ first entered the synagogue 'they began to love and to follow him more than the people of Israel'.²⁷⁰ The *mulier Cananaea*, who begged Jesus to heal her daughter and was not dissuaded by his rebuke (Matt 15:22-28), typifies this Gentile faithfulness, and she is an *imago Ecclesiae ex gentibus*.²⁷¹ In his exegesis of the previous two *lemmata* Gregory had documented Christ's superiority both over the law and over the *reges et sacerdotes* of the old dispensation, but here he claims superiority for the believing Gentiles over the 'foolish' Jews.

In this exegetical unit, Gregory draws very clear boundary lines between the church and the synagogue, which the former has now superseded. In subsequent books he will take up the issue of the 'present day' relationship between church and synagogue, but in the first book he is concerned with mapping the transition from one to the other as the chosen vessel of God's presence on earth. The church has claimed the law and the prophets as witnesses to its chosenness – evidenced most clearly by the fact that Gregory is using a book of the Old Testament to make his case – but the Jews themselves play little role in his account of the origins of the church. Their literary inheritance has been taken over, but as a people they have been (at least temporarily) left behind.

He makes clear the church's appropriation of the works of the synagogue in his interpretation of *Song* 1:10 – 'your cheeks are as beautiful as the turtledove's'. The cheeks are

'two kinds of saints in the head of the ecclesiastical body – the patriarchs and the apostles – who are who are discerned as conjoined or brought near by two lights – that is, two testaments ... the

²⁶⁹ *Cant.* 1.17 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 181): *sed adolescentulae istae novellae sunt plebes, quas nuper Christus de gentibus congregavit.*

²⁷⁰ *Cant.* 1.18 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 181): *Nam synagogae plebes vetulae ac stultae dicuntur, quia secundum veterem hominem vivunt et Christum, dei sapientiam, non receperunt.*

²⁷¹ *Cant.* 1.19 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 181).

knees impressed upon the eyes signify this, because in the womb of the mother Church the patriarchs, called knees, who were earlier in time, and the apostles, called the feet of the Lord, who are later have been brought together in one body and the later ones have been made equal to the earlier ones in the glory of one honour and dignity'.²⁷²

The patriarchs and apostles are of equal dignity, and their writings together constitute the one authority [*uno corpore*] for the church; Gregory vividly illustrates this with the image of the patriarchs and apostles conjoined 'in the womb of the mother church [*in utero matris Ecclesiae*]'.

(b) Gathering in the gentiles

Whereas for Gregory the literary inheritance of the church comes from the Jews, its makeup is entirely gathered *ex gentibus*. In his exegesis of *Song* 1:5 – 'I am dark and beautiful, o daughters of Jerusalem' – Gregory argues that the Church is dark – that is, 'could not be beautiful [*decora esse non*]' – on account of 'those from the gentiles [*ex gentibus*] who were about to believe. She indeed had been blackened by the foul smoke of idolatry and the pyre of sacrifices'.²⁷³ This church gathered from the gentiles, darkened on account of idolatry, is, however, made beautiful 'through the faith of Christ and the sanctity of the Spirit, which she received'.²⁷⁴ *Fusca* and *decora* are taken to be opposing terms, representing different moments in the life of the Church. The decisive moment when she transitioned from the one state to other is when she was 'washed by the waters of baptism...*purged of every spot or wrinkle* (Eph 5:27).²⁷⁵ Prior to the Incarnation, the gentiles were hopelessly entangled in and stained by the sin of idolatry.

²⁷² *Cant.* 2.30-1 (Schulz-Flügel, pp. 215-17): *duo sunt genera sanctorum in capite ecclesiastici corporis constituta, patriarchum scilicet et apostolorum, qui duobus luminibus, id est duobus testamentis, vel coniuncti vel proximi dinoscuntur...genua ergo impressa oculis hoc significant, quod in utero matris Ecclesiae tam priores patriarchae, quos genas appellat, quam posteriores apostolici, qui pedes domini nuncupantur, in uno corpore coniuncti et posteriores prioribus adequati unius honoris et dignitatis gloriae haberentur.*

²⁷³ *Cant.* 1.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 185): *Fusca itaque se dicebat Ecclesia propter eos, qui erant ex gentibus credituri. Erat quippe taetro idolatriae fumo et sacrificiorum busto fuscata.*

²⁷⁴ *Cant.* 1.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 185): *sed decora facta est per fidem Christi et sanctitatem spiritus, quem accepit.*

²⁷⁵ *Cant.* 1.26 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 187): *Iam enim aqua baptismatis lota est, iam ab omni macula vel ruga purgata.*

But they proved receptive, however, to the cleansing baptism of Christ and gathered together within the church.

Gregory then turns to the second half of *Song* 1:5, where the bride likens herself to the ‘tabernacles of Cedar’ and the ‘tent of Solomon’. He explains the reference to Cedar by making recourse to Hebrew etymology: ‘For *Cedar* when translated from the Hebrew into the Latin language means “shadowy”, for the gentile city then at Cedar swarmed with idolatry’.²⁷⁶ Again, Gregory emphasizes that the bride’s darkened appearance results from the gentile involvement with idolatry. But he uses the phrase ‘tent of Solomon’ to indict the Jews as practitioners of idolatry as well. Gregory asserts that the *pellis Salomonis* is ‘the flesh of Solomon, which was darkened by the foul sin of transgression of the old man, because Solomon erected the idols of the gentiles Astarten and Camos and also groves with idols’.²⁷⁷ The temptation to worship idols is thus not restricted to the Gentiles alone, but is symptomatic of the state of the ‘old man’, which includes the Jews as well. In the longer recension, he sharpens the distinction between his etymological exegesis of ‘Cedar’ and ‘tents of Solomon’, the former pertaining specifically to Gentile idolatry and the idolatrous condition of the ‘old man’, which includes the Jews.

Origen was the first to make a temporal division between the bride as ‘black’ and ‘beautiful’, the former state resulting from her ‘ignoble birth [*ignobilitate generis*]’ and ignorance of the divine Law, and the latter from her ‘penitence and faith [*paenitentiam et fidem*]’.²⁷⁸ His own interpretation of this verse differs quite substantially, however, in the *Homilies* and *Commentary*. In the *Commentary*, Origen emphasizes that ‘this bride who speaks is the person of the church gathered from the gentiles’ – an identification that he does not make in the *Homilies* – and that she is despised by ‘the daughters of this earthly Jerusalem [*filiae Hierusalem huius terrenae*]’ because ‘she is not able to ascribe

²⁷⁶ *Cant.* 1.28 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 187): *Cedar enim ex Hebraeo in Latinum sermonem tenebricosum interpretatur. Denique et apud Cedar civitatem gentilium tunc idolatria fervebat.* Origen, *Hom. In Cant.* 1.6 (SC 37, p. 71), gives the same etymology for Cedar, although he does not attempt to explain why the word means this, as Gregory does.

²⁷⁷ *Cant.* 1.29 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 188): *Pellem Salomonis carnem ipsius dicit Salomonis, quae taetro veteris hominis transgressionis vitio fuscabatur. Nam idola gentium, Astarten et Camos, sed et lucos idolis fabricavit.*

²⁷⁸ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.1.5 (SC 375, p. 264).

[*adscribere*] to herself the noble race [*generositatem*] of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'.²⁷⁹ This low birth is the reason for her blackness, but the bride defends her intrinsic beauty as well, because she possesses 'that first thing [*illud primum*]', which is the *imaginem Dei* according to which she was created.²⁸⁰ This beauty was fully realized in her, however, when she 'received the *Word made flesh*' as a bride, fulfilling the prophetic witness of Moses and the Ethiopian.²⁸¹ The focus of Origen's lengthy exposition of the passage in the *Commentary* is the *ecclesia ex gentibus* and her self-defense before the citizens of the earthly Jerusalem, and he turns to the individual soul only in the final sentences. By contrast, in the *Homilies* Origen interprets the verse as the words of the 'bride-soul [*anima sponsa*]' to her 'young maidens [*adulescentulae*]' – not the Jews.²⁸² Even in her post-baptismal state the bride is still black and is only in the process of becoming white; it is as the soul 'raises from the lower to the higher things [*ad maiora consurgit et ab humilibus*]' that she becomes increasingly beautiful. One can rise up – perhaps paradoxically – only by 'reclining upon [the Word's] breast, because that is the ground of our heart'. The soul is forever blackened by sin.

This verse, too, is cited by Tyconius in the *Liber Regularum*, although he interprets it in a very different way. I have discussed the passage in chapter two, so I shall only consider it here briefly. *Song* 1:5 is one of the passages that he adduces in support of his second rule, 'On the Bipartite Body of the Lord'. Unlike both Origen and Gregory, who understand the terms 'black/dark' and 'beautiful' to refer to different moments in the life of the Church – as a progression from sin to redemption – for Tyconius they refer to two distinct elements – 'evil' and 'good' – living together in the one church. This doctrine of the bipartite church, so central to Tyconius' theology, would be unthinkable to Gregory, in whose opinion the Church has 'no spot of offense, no wrinkle of perverse doctrine [*nullam maculam delicti, nullam rugam perversae doctrinae*]'.²⁸³ Although Tyconius' interpretation of the verse is sharply different from

²⁷⁹ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.1.3 (SC 375, p. 252).

²⁸⁰ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.1.4 (SC 375, p. 252).

²⁸¹ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.1.6 (SC 375, p. 264).

²⁸² *Hom. In Cant.* 1.6 (SC 37bis, pp. 71-3).

²⁸³ *Cant.* 1.26 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 187).

that of Origen and Gregory, between whom there is considerable continuity, he may be consciously deviating from Origenian tradition, rather than ignorant of it. He understands ‘Cedar’ to be a reference to Kedar, the son of Ishmael: ‘Two tabernacles are disclosed, one royal and one servile. Nevertheless, both are the seed of Abraham, because Kedar is the son of Ishmael’.²⁸⁴ Origen, too, makes this identification in the *Commentary*, although he does so to highlight God’s compassion towards the Gentiles rather than to make any claims for two competing elements in the church.²⁸⁵ Gregory, however, as we saw above, draws upon the etymological exegesis of ‘Cedar’ as *tenebricosus*, which Origen makes in his *Homilies*. It is perhaps the case that Victorinus, in his lost *Song* commentary, brought together both of these exegetical traditions, bequeathing the one to Tyconius and the other to Gregory.

On account of their idolatrous ways, the gentiles found themselves yoked in slavery to the devil. Gregory asserts that this is the meaning of *Song* 1:9, ‘My horses in the chariots of Pharaoh’: ‘For there were, at one time, horses of the Lord – that is, people of the gentiles – in the chariots of Pharaoh – that is, in the power of the devil, when they had not yet believed in Christ. And therefore he forewarns (her), lest she again return under this yoke through a contempt for faith’.²⁸⁶ When Christ came in the Incarnation, the gentiles were able to take upon them his yoke, throwing off servitude to the devil.

For Gregory the gentiles are not, however, interlopers claiming an inheritance that is not in any sense theirs. He asserts that Christ is called ‘a cluster of Cyprus’ in *Song* 1:14 ‘because he contains many grapes of believers within him, he who was pressed together by the venerable wood of the cross, and shed his own blood by the harvest of the passion not only for the Jews but also for the gentiles’.²⁸⁷ It is the blood of the crucified Christ that binds together the church – a point that he later develops in

²⁸⁴ LR (Burkitt, p. 10): *Duo tabernacula ostendit, regium et servile: utrumque tamen semen Abrahae; Cedar enim filius est Ishmael.*

²⁸⁵ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.1.

²⁸⁶ *Cant.* 2.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 211): *Fuerunt enim aliquando equae domini, id est plebes gentium, in curribus pharaonis, id est in diaboli potestate, cum necdum in Christo credidissent, et ideo praemonet, ne iterum per contemptum fidei sub iugo ipsius revertantur.*

²⁸⁷ *Cant.* 3.5 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 227): *Hoc ergo intelligendum est, quod Christus botrus est appellatus, eo quod multa in se credentium grana contineat, quique venerabili crucis ligno compressus sanguinem suum vindemia passionis effusum non solum Iudaeis, sed et gentibus...*

eucharistic terms.²⁸⁸ But that Christ shed his blood for both Jews and Gentiles leads Gregory to claim that in his humanity he is descended from both: ‘His flesh descends intermingled not only from the Jews but [also] from the Gentiles through the origin of his ancestors [*patrum*]’.²⁸⁹ He reinforces this claim with reference to *Exod* 12:5, in which the sacrificial lamb is to be sought *ab ovibus et haedis*. The lamb is a figure [*typum*] of Christ, who must therefore be of mixed origin (of sheep and goats – that is, of Jews and Gentiles). Gregory also produces a more straightforwardly ‘historical’ justification. Ruth, who married Boaz, was a Moabitess and hence a Gentile. She gave birth to Obed (Gregory erroneously says Jesse), the greatgrandfather of David, from whose lineage Christ descends in his humanity.²⁹⁰ Gregory provides a more fleshed out version of this exegesis (including the correct identification of Obed as the son) in *Tract.* 9.6-7.

2. The Present Struggles of the Church

(a) The persecuting synagogue

Although the church has superseded the synagogue, the relationship between the two has not come to an end. Gregory asserts that the church endured attacks from the Jews in the past and needs to remain on guard. Commenting on *Song* 1:6 – ‘the son of my mother fought against me’ – Gregory is initially detained by the question of who the

²⁸⁸ In the opening lines of the third book, he interprets the ‘nard’ of *Song* 1:12b as ‘the grace of the chrism made perfect by the virtue of the cross’, since it is ‘oil mixed with wood [*oleum ligno permixtum*]’ (*Cant.* 3.1; Schulz-Flügel, p. 226). The post-baptismal anointing thus seals the believer with the perfection Christ attained on the cross. Likewise, the statement ‘the troughs are cypresses’ (*Song* 1:17) leads Gregory to a discussion of the eucharist, because he asserts that when Christ was born ‘*he was found placed in a manger* (*Luke* 2:7)’. Christ thus became ‘the very nourishment for us sheep [*pabulum nobis quo<n>dam pecoribus*]’ and the souls of believers [*credentium animae*] are sustained ‘with the food of the holy body and drink of blood’ (*Cant.* 3.17; Schulz-Flügel, p. 233). Again, and perhaps not surprisingly, Gregory interprets the ‘house of wine’ of *Song* 2:4 as ‘the sacrament of the passion [*sacramento passionis*]’: ‘For this wine is the blood of Christ, which is always drunk by the believers in the church at the mystery of his passion’ (*Cant.* 3.24; Schulz-Flügel, p. 235). The eucharist, for Gregory, is spiritual nourishment both because of Christ’s assumption of flesh in the nativity and his shedding of blood on the cross.

²⁸⁹ *Cant.* 3.5 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 229): *Denique caro ipsius non solum ex Iudaeis, sed ex gentibus per patrum originem permixta descendit.*

²⁹⁰ *Cant.* 3.6-8.

mother of the church is; he quickly concludes, however, that ‘her mother is the synagogue according to the flesh’.²⁹¹ This interpretation is opposed to what we find in Origen’s *Commentary*, although it has some points of contact with the *Homilies*. In the *Commentary*, Origen employs *Gal* 4:24-7 as an intertext and identifies the mother with the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’.²⁹² There is thus no (maternal) kinship between the Church and the synagogue; Gregory takes the opposite approach, identifying the two as offspring of the same mother. Origen is rather more ambiguous in the *Homilies*: ‘Consider Paul, the persecutor of the church, and you will understand in what way *the sons of her mother fought against her*’.²⁹³ It is unclear whether Origen here considers ‘the sons of her mother’ to denote specifically the Jews, or all those who were outside the church: ‘The persecutors of the church have repented, and her adversaries have turned again to their sister’s banners.’²⁹⁴ Hippolytus makes no attempt at identification.²⁹⁵

It is Gregory alone who explicitly identifies the ‘sons’ as the *populi synagogae*: they ‘persecuted the church of God with many trials. First, they crucified the flesh itself of the Lord [*ipsam carnem domini*], then they afflicted all those who believed in him with different kinds of punishments’.²⁹⁶ For Origen, the sons play a pedagogical role, fighting those gathered *ex gentibus* to put off their ‘unbelief’ and ‘disobedience’ in order to attain renewal in Christ.²⁹⁷ In the *Tractatus*, however, they are malicious and evil, leading the faithful body of Christ into temptation and corruption – and the persecutors are specifically identified as Jewish, *not* pagan. The people of Israel have been left behind [*relicta*], because their vine has not been pruned of the overgrowth of the law. Paul the persecutor merited to become an apostle precisely because he ‘left that

²⁹¹ *Cant.* 2.1 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 193): *Matrem utique suam secundum carnem synagogam dicit.*

²⁹² *Comm. In Cant.* 2.3.4 (SC 375, p. 318).

²⁹³ *Hom. In Cant.* 1.7 (SC 37bis, pp. 92-4): *Vide mihi Paulum ecclesiae persecutorem et intelliges quomodo filius matris eius pugnauerit contra eam.*

²⁹⁴ *Hom. In Cant.* 1.7 (SC 37bis, p. 94): *Persecutores ecclesiae egerunt paenitentiam et adversarii eius rursum ad sororis signa conversi...*

²⁹⁵ *Sermo* 5.2.

²⁹⁶ *Cant.* 2.2 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 193): *Filii ergo matris populi sunt synagogae, qui Ecclesiam dei in multis temptationibus persecuti sunt, primum, quod ipsam carnem domini crucifixerunt, deinde, quod omnes credentes in eo variis poenarum generibus adflixerunt.*

²⁹⁷ *Comm. In Cant.* 2.3.6 (SC 375, p. 318).

vineyard, the people of Israel, which he had received for guarding', and he did not wish to keep 'the duties of the law – the circumcision of the flesh, the dietary observances, the keeping of the Sabbath, new moons and feast days of purification'.²⁹⁸ The law must be viewed through the filter of the *praecepta Christi*, which now constitute the sole true rule.²⁹⁹

Gregory draws a firm boundary line between the observance of the *legalem munificentiam* and the *praecepta Christi*; Christians are to cling to the latter and shun the former. The rhetoric is unsurprising, but it has led scholars to question the extent of the interaction between the Jewish and Christian communities in Elvira. There is no doubt that at the turn of the fourth century there were Jewish communities in Baetica. The sixteenth canon of the synod of Elvira forbids parents from marrying their daughters to 'Jews or heretics', with a punishment of removal from communion for five years for transgressors.³⁰⁰ There are also a series of two later canons forbidding landholders from having their land 'blessed by Jews' and Christians in general from eating with Jews; the former is punished by complete expulsion from communion, but there is no punishment stated for the latter.³⁰¹ Only five³⁰² of the eighty-one canons pertain to relations with Jews, so it does not appear to have been a pressingly serious matter for the bishops present, but it does demonstrate the existence of at least moderately sized communities. This is not at all unsurprising, for it has been suggested that Christianity was brought to Spain through Jewish communities.³⁰³ It is, however, unclear what the size of the Jewish community would have been in Elvira in the 340s-50s and how much interaction it had with the Christians. In the fourth homily of the *Tractatus Origenis*, Gregory asserts that 'often we struggle against the Jews concerning circumcision [*saepe nobis adversum Iudaeos de circumcisione certamen est*]'.³⁰⁴ But it is difficult to know whether Gregory is referring to actual debates between Jews and Christians in Elvira or

²⁹⁸ *Cant.* 2.4 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 195): *noluit legalem munificentiam observare, circumcisionem carnis, observantias escarum, sabbati curam, neomenias et dies festos purificationis.*

²⁹⁹ *Cant.* 2.4 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 195): *quia relictā vinea Israel praecepta Christi maluit custodire.*

³⁰⁰ *Can.* 16.

³⁰¹ *Can.* 49-50.

³⁰² *Can.* 16, 26, 49, 50, 78 (16 and 78 mention Jews together with pagans).

³⁰³ Richardson, *Romans in Spain*, p. 262.

³⁰⁴ *Tract.* 4.1 (CCSL 69, p. 27).

whether the *saepe* refers to different moments in the history of the church when Jews challenged Christians on their interpretation of the Old Testament.

One recent article, entitled ‘Comunidades Judeocristianas Granadinas’, has taken a rather maximalist approach to the question, based largely on Gregory’s exegetical writings.³⁰⁵ Lomas argues that Gregory’s fierce anti-Jewish rhetoric stems from direct and heated conflict with the Elviran Jewish community, which he describes as *rica y numerosa*.³⁰⁶ There were, he asserts, two reasons for this conflict. First, drawing upon the system of patronage in Late Antiquity, where wealthy *patroni* were sought to provide financial support for church building, scholarship, and other activities, Lomas argues that the Church would have been in direct competition with the synagogue for funds. Gregory thus attempted to discredit the synagogue, with its venerable ancient customs, to woo potential *patroni* to support the church.³⁰⁷ Lomas, however, also asserts that there were numerous Elviran Christians who were attempting to ‘reconcile Jewish practices with the Christian faith’, and Gregory had to demonstrate the insufficiency of the Law and the incompatibility of the two religions.³⁰⁸ Both suggestions are possible – the latter perhaps being especially attractive in the light of recent attempts to push the so-called Parting(s) of the Ways between Judaism and Christianity ever later in antiquity³⁰⁹ – but it must be said that none of Gregory’s writings provide any direct evidence in support of either. If Elviran Christians were making a habit of going to the synagogue, Gregory does not mention the practice.³¹⁰

It would be unwise to suppose that there were no interactions whatsoever between Christians and Jews in Elvira; there likely was at the very least some practical

³⁰⁵ F. J. Lomas, ‘Comunidades Judeocristianas Granadinas: Consideraciones Sobre la Homiletica de Gregorio de Elvira’, in *La sociedad de la Bética: contribuciones para su estudio* (e. C. González Román; Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1994), pp. 319-44.

³⁰⁶ Lomas, ‘Comunidades Judeocristianas’, p. 332. He offers no evidence – archaeological or textual – in support of this claim.

³⁰⁷ Lomas, ‘Comunidades Judeocristianas’, pp. 329-33.

³⁰⁸ Lomas, ‘Comunidades Judeocristianas’, pp. 333-44.

³⁰⁹ See especially A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds.), *Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

³¹⁰ The closest thing we have to evidence of Jewish-Christian syncretism is the sixteenth canon of Elvira, which warns against parents marrying their daughters to Jews. Such intermarriage would likely entail a mixing of practices and customs. How widespread such marriages were is impossible to tell.

merit to Gregory's rehashing of earlier anti-Jewish polemic in his homilies.³¹¹ But his constant preoccupation with the synagogue is likely due to theological, rather than sociological, factors. Gregory's doctrine that the church is, in a very tangible sense, an extension of the deified flesh of Christ leads him to posit a total break between the church and everything that preceded it: the *ecclesia* represents an entirely new way of God interacting with humanity.

(b) The deception of the heretics and the purity of faith

Despite the significant attention devoted to heresy and doctrinal purity in Matter's and Henry's studies, there are few instances of such concerns in the *Tractatus*. Indeed, there are only two textual units devoted to the subject in the entire work: one occurs at *Cant.* 2.8-23 as an interpretation of *Song* 1:7b-8, and the other occurs at *Cant.* 4.24-5 as an interpretation of *Song* 2:15. The former is a considerably longer and more detailed passage than the latter.

Gregory's brief Christological reflections in *Cant.* 2.5-8, which form the 'spiritual sense' of *Song* 1:7a, sets the stage for a lengthy warning against the teachings of 'false apostles and frauds [*pseudoapostolos et circumventores*]',³¹² He interprets the imperative of *Cant* 1:8 – 'if you do not know yourself to be beautiful among women, go out into the footsteps of the flocks' – as Christ's exhortation to the church to guard the true faith, and Gregory articulates this using the language of purity and defilement. In this section, more than any other in the *Tractatus*, Gregory conceptualizes doctrinal orthodoxy as a state of virginal purity and heresy as corrupted innocence. Moreover, all the main players – the church, heretics, and the synagogue – are depicted as women, who are either true or unfaithful to their male spouse.³¹³ Although N. Henry asserts that throughout the *Tractatus* Gregory associates 'sexual purity (freedom from lust) and doctrinal purity', Gregory is only explicitly concerned in this section with proper

³¹¹ On Gregory's use of earlier Latin anti-Jewish sources, see especially the discussion of the fourth *Tractatus* in Chapter Four

³¹² *Cant.* 2.11 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 201). The longer recension adds *et circumventores*.

³¹³ *Cant.* 2.17.

doctrine.³¹⁴ One could, perhaps, extrapolate from Gregory's sexually-charged language in this passage the way in which he conceived of actual female virginity and of the power-relations between men and women, but he makes no explicit links. Gregory's silence is significant, for Ambrose very clearly privileged the consecrated virgin as a symbol of ecclesial unity because her espousal to Christ, embodied in her chastity, made visible the hidden marriage of Christ to the Church and to each soul in baptism.

Gregory begins his exegesis by considering the church's fear that she will '*become as veiled over [super] the flocks of your companions*'.³¹⁵ Unlike Origen, Gregory is far more concerned to understand what it means to be 'veiled' than to identify who are 'the flocks of your companions'. Origen offers a lengthy explanation in the *Commentary* that the companions are angels who have been entrusted with the care of different nations, just as Christ is guardian or shepherd of Israel. The 'flocks', then, are the various pagan nations, and their inhabitants are 'veiled' as brides, in a kind of parodic mimesis of the church's epousal to Christ. Taking the analogy further, Origen argues that each nation has its own schools, which teach the 'wisdom of this world' rather than the 'wisdom of God'. The verse, for Origen, represents the desire of the church (or the individual soul) to avoid the false philosophy of the nations and to take refuge instead in the protection of Christ, the good shepherd.³¹⁶

Gregory's exegesis of the verse can be placed in the same broad trajectory as Origen's – although with a sharp anti-heretical and anti-Jewish point to it – but the individual points of interpretation are quite different. For Gregory *Song* 1:7-8 forms a discrete interpretive unit, although in two parts: *Song* 1:7a provides the Christological dogma, and *Song* 1:7b-8 illustrates the decisive need to preserve this doctrine inviolate. His primary concern is not, however, the allure of pagan philosophy, but rather a more insidious kind of deception – the influence of heretical priests: 'And since the Spirit knew that there would be many false apostles and fraudulent ones in the church, he wished to teach more fully through Christ the definite content of catholic learning and

³¹⁴ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 80.

³¹⁵ *Cant.* 2.8 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 199).

³¹⁶ Origen, *Comm. In Cant.* 2.4.13-15.

the feeding of his words and the stopping-place of evangelical preaching'.³¹⁷ To 'become as veiled' is, for Gregory, to give the appearance of being a Christian while holding to heretical doctrine. The church prays to Christ that she will not be deceived by those 'under the veiling of your name – which is called cloak – or under the occasion of evangelical preaching...by heretical seduction *from the subtlety of words* (Col 2:4)' and, hence, become veiled herself.³¹⁸ The latter portion of the verse, *super greges sodalium tuorum*, exercises him little. The companions are not the 'nations', as they were for Origen, but rather they are the 'apostolic people [*apostolicas plebes*]': to be led astray by heretical deception is to 'place some new stumbling-block in the way of the apostolic peoples'.³¹⁹

It is at this point that Gregory begins to introduce the language of purity and defilement into his discourse. The church fears that 'through the prevarication of false priests [she] will become separated from the sole truth', and she desires that her 'integrity and simplicity [*integritas et simplicitas*] might be seen by the apostolic people to be pure and inviolate without any taint [*fuco*] of duplicity, not covered with the veil of falsity'.³²⁰ Although the language has strong overtones of physical chastity (*integritas* can mean wholeness or completeness in its general sense, but can denote virginity, more specifically), Gregory's concern is doctrinal. The 'rapacious wolves' of *Matt* 7:15 are 'the heretics who devoured the people of Christ by means of illicit doctrine'.³²¹

The voice of the church in *Song* 1:7a-8 is filled with fear – fear that her virginity will be corrupted by heretics in the guise of priests. Gregory describes the church as 'the one, holy, and inviolate dove [*sancta et inviolata simplex columba*]', a clear allusion to *Cant* 6:8 – the text so dear to Cyprian and, later, the Donatists – which is overlaid with

³¹⁷ *Cant.* 2.11 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 201): *Et quia multos pseudoapostolos et circumventores futuros sciebat spiritus Ecclesiae, certam definitionem catholicae traditionis et pastum verborum suorum et mansionem evangelicae per Christum plenius volebat addiscere*

³¹⁸ *Cant.* 2.12 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 201): *id est ne forte sub velamento nominis tui, quod amictum vocat, aut sub occasione evangelicae praedicationis a seductoribus haereticis verborum subtilitate decipiar* (Col 2:4).

³¹⁹ *Cant.* 2.12 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 203): *id est super apostolicas plebes, aliquod superinduas scandalum.*

³²⁰ *Cant.* 2.13 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 203): *Id est ne per prevaricationem falsorum sacerdotum efficiar a sola veritate segregata...id est ab apostolica plebe, integritas et simplicitas mea sine aliquo circumventionis fuco pura et inviolata cernatur, non tamen circumamicta velamine falsitatis.*

³²¹ *Cant.* 2.14 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 203): *qui devorarent plebes Christi per doctrinam ob commissionem illicitam.* This is an addition of the longer recension.

even stronger language of purity and chastity than the biblical text provides.³²²

Moreover, Gregory's allusion to *Matt 7:15* transforms a shepherding metaphor into one of sexual violation – the 'rapacious wolves' become the 'corruptors of her virginity [*corruptores virginitatis suae*]'.³²³

Gregory continues to press the language of purity and defilement by mapping orthodoxy and heresy onto a social landscape where the former is represented by the chaste woman and the latter by the harlot. In his exegesis of the bridegroom's exhortation in *Song 1:8* – 'if you do not know yourself to be beautiful among women' – Gregory asserts, 'But who are these women, among whom the Church ought to know herself to be alone virgin, uncorrupted, and decorous, we ought diligently to seek. There is no doubt that these women are the people of the heretics mentioned before, who, corrupted by the deception of adulterous doctrine and violated by the adultery of perverse tradition, have merited to be called women, not virgins. For the people of the synagogue are also said to be those women, whom Holy Scripture testifies prostituted after foreign gods'.³²⁴ Using language familiar from the Old Testament prophets, specifically Hosea, heretics (and Jews) are depicted as loose adulterous women who violated their vows of fidelity to Christ by adopting corrupt doctrines. In making a tacit connection between non-virgin women [*mulieres*] and prostitutes, we may be able to catch a glimpse of Gregory's ascetic approach to human sexuality. But, if so, it remains only a glimpse.

In his exegesis of *Song 2:15*, Gregory distinguishes between 'foxes [*vulpes*]' and 'little foxes [*vulpes pusillas*]'. The latter are heretics who deceive and destroy the 'people of the saints who are flowering in faith and in truth'.³²⁵ But they are, nonetheless, *pusillas*. The real threat are the *principes* – 'rulers' – who are seduced by

³²² *Cant.* 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205).

³²³ *Cant.* 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205).

³²⁴ *Cant.* 2.16 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205): *Sed quae sunt istae mulieres, inter quas se solam virginem incorruptam et decoram cognoscere deberet Ecclesia, diligentius debemus advertere. Mulieres itaque has haereticorum plebes praedictas esse nulla est dubitatio, quae adulterae doctrinae stupore corruptae et perversae traditionis adulterio violatae iam non virgines sed mulieres dici meruerunt.*

³²⁵ *Cant.* 4.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 247): *Vulpes in hoc loco haereticos designat exterminantes vineas, id est plebes sanctorum in fide et veritate florentes.*

the heretics and are induced to persecute the faithful.³²⁶ It is not unlikely that Gregory is here making a tacit reference to Constantius and his sympathies towards the enemies of Athanasius.

3. The Moral Rigorism of the *Tractatus*

There are, in addition to the passages above, several places in the *Tractatus* where Gregory seems to develop a rigorist approach to moral and sexual purity. In his exegesis of *Song* 1:9, he identifies ‘Pharaoh with the devil, in whose servitude the gentiles were enlisted before the coming of Christ.’³²⁷ In the longer recension of the passage, Gregory adds the exhortation that ‘we ought to hold this very faith with a pure heart and sincere devotion in all sanctity and justice [*puro corde et sincera devotione in omni sanctitate et iustitia hanc eandem fidem tenemus*]’, and he threatens that they might again fall prey to Satan if they do not ‘always guard these things with incorrupt and inviolate devotion [*semper incorrupta et inviolata devotione custodire*]’.³²⁸ This could be interpreted as meaning that there is no room for penance in the Christian communion, since those who sin will be enslaved again to Pharaoh. Likewise, in his exegesis of *Song* 1:10-11, he asserts that the neck of the church has been decorated with ‘the ornaments of martyrdom and of virginity and of all good things [*martyrii et virginitatis atque omnium bonorum operum ornamentis*]’.³²⁹ Notably, however, this is the only praise of martyrdom and virginity in the entire work, and it occurs only in the longer recension.

There are also two specific passages that suggest a rather broader ecclesiology than Gregory is usually credited as having. Gregory’s interpretation of *Song* 2:2 – ‘as a lily in the middle of thorns, thus is my neighbour in the middle of sons and daughters’ – is particularly striking. Origen asserts in his *Commentary* that this lily is the church among the ‘schemes of the heretics’.³³⁰ The thorns are later called ‘daughters’ – that is, those who started out in right relationship with God as part of the church but fell into

³²⁶ *Cant.* 4.25 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 247).

³²⁷ *Cant.* 2.24 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 211): *Fuerunt enim aliquando equae domini, id est plebes gentium, in curribus pharaonis, id est in diaboli potestate, cum necdum in Christo credidissent.*

³²⁸ *Cant.* 2.27-8 (Schulz-Flügel, pp. 213-5).

³²⁹ *Cant.* 2.36 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 221).

³³⁰ *Comm. In Cant.* 3.4.

heresy. For Gregory, however, the thorns are ‘people in the church, who produce thorns and thistles – that is, they make thorns of sins through the anxiety of the world and through riches and ambitions and worldly powers...the larger part of believers is set on these worldly cares’.³³¹ Gregory is here drawing upon the Lukan parable of the sower (*Luke* 8:1-15), in which Christ explains that the seed sown among the thorns represents those who hear his preaching yet have their faith choked by riches and pleasures. Although Gregory offers the negative assessment that it is in fact the majority of believers who are focused on ‘worldly cares’, he is nonetheless willing to grant a place to them in the church, thereby undermining the argument that he can only envisage a church of the pure. It is, however, unclear from the passage whether Gregory shares with Tyconius the view that these unrighteous Christians are doomed to judgment at the eschaton. Perhaps less compellingly, but nonetheless still relevant, he understands *Song* 2:12-13, which speaks of the ‘turtle dove’ and the ‘little fig trees’, to signify the Gentile church and the Jewish believers respectively. The turtledove represents the *ecclesia ex gentibus* on account of its ‘variety of feathers [*de varietate plumarum*]’ – it is a single body that contains much diversity. His reasoning for connecting the fig trees with the Jews is less straightforward. It is based upon Christ’s claim in *Matthew* 24:32 that ‘when you see the fig tree germinating, know that the time of summer is near’. When Jews begin to turn to faith in Christ, this is a sign that the ‘coming of the Lord is near [*in proximum esse adventum domini*]’.³³² Whatever Gregory’s attitude towards his contemporary Jews, he still believes that there is a time when they will join the body of Christ.

We must thus be cautious when speaking of Gregory’s rigorism. It is, indeed, true that he does at times appear to privilege virginity as the most desirable way of life and demand from his clergy and congregation moral perfection. But, at other times, he makes allowances for human weakness, indicating that the Elviran church must have had

³³¹ *Cant.* 3.20 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 233): *multi in Ecclesia, qui spinas et tribulos generant, id est per sollicitudinem mundi, per divitias honores et ambitiones saecularis potentiae, spinas peccatorum producant.*

³³² *Cant.* 4.16-7 (Schulz-Flügel, pp. 243-4).

a place for penitents. And, we must, as always, be mindful that it only in the longer recension that many of Gregory's harshest statements appear.

4. The Ecclesiology of the *Tractatus* and its Historical Context

It remains, however, to determine the historical context that shaped Gregory's exposition of his doctrine of the church. The Luciferian underpinnings of his ecclesiology have been asserted, but never properly demonstrated.³³³ We can glean a sense of the key issues at play for the Luciferians from two extant texts that are contemporary with the heyday of the movement – the *Libellus Precum ad Imperatores*, composed by Luciferian presbyters, and the *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*, a polemical tract written by Jerome in the style of a Socratic dialogue.³³⁴ We should expect the *Altercatio* to present us with a caricature of a Luciferian, but this does not mean that the phrases and concerns that Jerome puts into his mouth cannot give us a sense of what actual Luciferians believed. After a very brief exposition of the key points of these two texts, we shall turn to a comparison with the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*.

The Luciferian Helladius, with whom Jerome's 'Orthodoxus' engages in debate, has a relatively dim view of humanity, in general, and the church, in particular. He says that 'the whole world is of the devil [*universum orbem Diabolis esse*]' and that 'out of

³³³ Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 77, does attempt to illustrate a connection between Gregory and the Luciferians, comparing Lucifer's reference to the Arian heresy as a *meretrix spiritualis* in the *De non conveniendo cum haereticis* (6) with Gregory's development of the notion that heretics are adulterous women in the *Tractatus*. But the theme of heresy (or apostasy) as infidelity can be traced all the way back to the Old Testament, and such a vague connection cannot suffice to demonstrate a relationship.

³³⁴ The date and location of composition of the *Libellus Precum* are certain; Faustinus and Marcellinus composed it at Rome in 383/4. The same certainty does not exist for the *Altercatio*. Virtually every year from 376-88 has been proposed for its composition (see the very detailed discussion in A. Canellis, SC 473, pp. 28-34). Canellis, the text's editor, proposes that Jerome composed the text in 379 at Antioch because 'elle ne suspecte pas le bon foi de Jérôme dans son *De Viris*, correspond à la tendance politique du moment, et laisse augurer de l'attitude du nouvel empereur' (SC 473, p. 33). I am not convinced by her argument and would suggest Rome (382-4) as the more likely place of composition. Y.M. Duval has already noted similarities between the *Libellus* and the *Altercatio* ('Saint Jérôme devant le baptême des hérétiques, d'autres sources de l'*Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*' *REAug* 14 (1968), pp. 153, 176). Given the existence of Luciferian clergy and anti-pope in Rome, he would have had the most reason to write an anti-Luciferian tract when he was at Rome.

the church a brothel has been made [*factum de Ecclesia lupanar*]',³³⁵ The entire dialogue turns on a debate as to whether it is acceptable for clergy coming over from the 'Arian' party to remain clergy in the Nicene communion: Orthodoxus affirms that this poses no problem, whereas Helladius cannot imagine such tainted hands handling the Eucharistic elements.³³⁶ Indeed, he asserts, for someone who has proclaimed that 'the Son of God is a creature [*creaturam dei Filium*]' to so come into the church would be like an adulterer defiling a virgin.³³⁷ But Helladius does not have such a high view of the purity of the church that one who has been defiled by assent to heretical doctrine should be entirely excluded from communion. He asserts that there exists a clear difference between laypeople and priests: the former may be received with the imposition of hands, whereas the latter must set aside their priestly status and become lay Christians.³³⁸ Unlike the Novatianists and Donatists, the Luciferians do not practice rebaptism.³³⁹

The rest of the debate is dominated by Orthodoxus, who slowly leads Helladius to see the inherent contradiction in receiving a layperson with the laying on of hands (thereby accepting the validity of Arian baptism) but not allowing a bishop to retain his chair (thereby rejecting the validity of Arian orders). Helladius' eventual capitulation is entirely irrelevant to the task of historical reconstruction at hand. But the work is not without value. It is clear that the main bone of contention for the Luciferians is that the purity of the church has been sullied by allowing former 'Arian' bishops – a group that in the main most likely consisted of those who subscribed at Ariminum – to retain their status as bishops in the Nicene communion. The Luciferians were not so extreme, however, that they forbade former 'heretics' from entering into the communion as laypersons.

³³⁵ *Alt.* 1 (SC 473, p. 2).

³³⁶ *Alt.* 3 (SC 473, p. 88).

³³⁷ *Alt.* 3 (SC 473, p. 90): *virginem adulter ingredieris*.

³³⁸ *Alt.* 4 (SC 473, p. 92): *Recipio laicum quia errasse se confitetur... cur episcopus perseverat? deponat sacerdotium, concedo veniam poenitenti*.

³³⁹ *Alt.* 4 (SC 473, p. 94): *recipimus laicos, quoniam nemo convertetur, si se scierit rebaptizandum*.

Indeed, Helladius rehashes the arguments first advanced by the 'laxists' in North Africa that baptism and the conferring of the Holy Spirit are two separate things – heretics can rightly perform the former, but they cannot give the latter (cf. *Alt.* 6).

The *Libellus Precum* is, in contrast to Jerome's fictional work, a formal petition for toleration to the Emperors Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius written by two actual Roman Luciferian presbyters, Faustinus and Marcellinus.³⁴⁰ The first part of the petition is a history of the Arian controversy from the council of Nicaea to the council of Ariminum. Special attention is paid to Gregory of Elvira, Ossius of Cordoba, Potamius of Lisbon, and Florentius of Emerita (Merida). They begin with the transgressions of Potamius and Ossius – the former going over to the Arian party to acquire a *fiscus fundalis*, the latter appending his name to the Blasphemy of Sirmium so that he could return to his lavish life in Cordoba (9.32). The authors contrast the weakness of Potamius and Ossius with the courage of *sanctus Gregorius*, who stands up to the prevaricating Ossius when summoned to Cordoba (9.33-11.41). Ossius and Potamius, predictably, are struck down by God for their impiety (10.38; 11.41-2). Florentius, however, is a slightly different case. He never subscribed to an 'Arian' formula, but he did communicate [*communicavit*] with both Ossius and Potamius. Holding communion with prevaricators was sufficient for Florentius to receive divine punishment (11.43-4). The authors thus condemn the practice of communicating with heretics. They take this conviction even farther, however, by arguing that it is not right to communicate with bishops who had once subscribed to heretical formulae, even if they had since converted to the Nicene faith. They argue that the bishops did not lapse at Ariminum out of ignorance, as Rufinus asserts, but rather out of fear of the imperial authorities, and that they returned to the Nicene communion only because it was safe to do so under Julian and Jovian (14.51). The Luciferian grounds for the rejection of lapsed clergy are thus clear: 'Where is the faith and the veneration of Christ when, by the will of the earthly emperor, catholic bishops now become heretics and then those same ones return to the catholic faith from heresy?'³⁴¹ There is no room for fair-weather bishops in the catholic communion.

³⁴⁰ *Lib.* 1.1 (SC 504, p. 106).

³⁴¹ *Lib.* 14.52 (SC 504, p. 158): *Et ubi iam fides et veneratio Christi est quando, pro terreni imperatoris arbitrio, episcopi nunc ex catholicis fiunt haeretici et idem ipsi ex haereticis ad fidem catholicam revertuntur?*

The *Libellus Precum* also makes it clear that Luciferians were being actively persecuted by catholic bishops, although it is difficult to verify the extent to which this actually occurred. In several places, Faustinus and Marcellinus point out the irony that formerly ‘Arian’/‘heretical’ bishops who had persecuted catholic Christians were now using their position as catholics [*sub auctoritate catholici nominis*] to persecute the Luciferians under anti-heresy laws (2.3; 15.56). He then relates the stories of the persecution of Vincentius in Baetica (20.73-76); Bonosus in Trier (21.77); and the anti-popes Macarius (21.77) and Ephesius (23.83-5) and the presbyter Macarius (21.78-82) at Rome. Luciferians were thus very conscious of their status as a persecuted minority.

In both texts, we see that the primary concern is with bishops who have publicly lapsed, repented, subscribed to the Nicene creed, and now wish to be recognized as legitimate bishops in the pro-Nicene communion. The language of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, is, however, entirely different. Gregory is deeply worried about those clergy who are ‘rapacious wolves in sheep’s clothing’ – respectable presbyters and bishops who are teaching heretical doctrines.³⁴² The *Tractatus* gives the impression that there is no standard definition of orthodoxy, and that these wolves are surreptitiously trying to deceive their flocks into accepting heretical teachings. There was no such lack of clarity after the synod of Alexandria.

The events of the late 340s and early 350s have much to commend them as the context in which the *Tractatus* was composed. First, the synod of Serdica would clearly have given Western bishops the impression that the East was a melting pot of heresy. The number of Western sympathizers listed in greeting of the Eastern encyclical demonstrates that the problem was steadily creeping west of Illyricum. Secondly, the reference to ‘rapacious wolves in sheep’s clothing’ could be a specific allusion to the restoration of Ursacius and Valens to communion with Julius in 345/7. It may, however, also refer to the increasingly large number of Western bishops who subscribed to the encyclical letter of Sirmium beginning in 351. A third clue lies in his distinction between little and big foxes – the former being heretics, and the latter being the

³⁴² *Cant.* 2.15 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 205).

persecuting secular *principes*.³⁴³ It is odd indeed that a Christian writer in the latter half of the fourth century consider persecution to be a greater evil and threat than heresy. Unless, of course, it is a tacit reference to Constantius, who, although he did not execute Romans for being Christians, used his office to ensure that bishops adopted heretical beliefs, thus deeply wounding the church. If, moreover, Constantius were still alive, it would be particularly prudent of Gregory to conceal his criticism.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This lengthy analysis has led us to three important conclusions about the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*. First, its theology cannot be in any meaningful sense described as pro-Nicene. Gregory makes no reference to the Nicene creed and borrows his Christological language almost exclusively from Tertullian and Novatian. Secondly, its ecclesiology cannot be considered Luciferian. Gregory's reflections upon the spotless purity of the church, seemingly applicable to all its members, do not align with the Luciferian concern for the character of bishops alone. Gregory, indeed, never specifically mentions bishops – much less repentant ones – and the Luciferians are not particularly concerned about the laity, who they are happy to accept with the imposition of hands alone. Thirdly, the *Tractatus* is neither a 'polemic against heretics' nor does it reflect an excessively rigorist ecclesiology that leaves no room for sin or error and privileges the chaste life above all else.

The *Tractatus* is, rather, a manifesto on the church. Gregory traces its history from its origins in the Incarnation, through its trials and tribulations in the present age, to its eschatological fulfilment at the second coming of Christ, when the Jews will come again to salvation. Christology plays an important role in the treatise, for the church is the continuing embodiment of Christ's deified flesh on the earth. In this strong link

³⁴³ *Cant.* 4.25 (Schulz-Flügel, p. 247): *Maiores sunt utique principes, gentium potestates, ad saeviendum quam haereticorum fallaciae ad seducendum, par quidem nequitia in utrumque, sed impar in ultione potestas.*

between Christ and the church, Gregory brings a unique Spanish mode of Christological reflection, also evident in the writings of Pacian of Barcelona, to the early Latin exegetical tradition. He emphatically rejects doctrines that deny the humanity or divinity of Christ, because they threaten to undermine the church's soteriological efficacy. Heresy, too, has a role to play in the *Tractatus*, for it was a threatening force in Gregory's world; it is not, however, an all-consuming preoccupation. Gregory, moreover, praises virginity – as he does martyrdom – as an ideal to which Christians should aspire, but neither does this comprise the main focus of the treatise.

The *Tractatus* may also be considered a *prolegomenon* to Gregory's theology, introducing many important themes that come to dominate his writings: the nature of Christ, his relationship to the church, the path to salvation, the efficacy of the sacraments, and the purity that is required of all believers. I thus draw rather the opposite conclusion from Francis Buckley, who sees the *Tractatus* as the great Gregorian synthesis.³⁴⁴ One can easily imagine that as the new bishop of Elvira Gregory delivered lectures on the *Song*, perhaps during the time set aside for the study of the scriptures at Lent, to share his theological vision with his clergy and congregation. The passages on heresy, limited primarily to Book Two, are likely an acknowledgment of the brewing storms of doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversy. He could well have circulated these lectures to some of his new colleagues in Baetica.³⁴⁵ Moreover, as I demonstrated in Chapter Three, Gregory at some point set out to revise the work. The revisions reflect a greater concern for proper literary style, but they also represent a greater concern for doctrinal and moral purity. Perhaps he did this in the late 350s as an initial response to the crisis in Spain posed by Ossius' capitulation at Sirmium. That Gregory seems only to have got as far as the second book may indicate that he deemed the dual Christological-Ecclesiological focus of the work insufficient to respond to the

³⁴⁴ Buckley, *Christ and the Church*, p. 183. But the conclusion is erroneous because of his excessive preoccupation with the notion of 'participation' in Gregory. Gregory's doctrine of the church is not more developed in the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* than it is in the *Tractatus Origenis*, as Butler contends; it simply receives more attention. The Christology of the work, moreover, is clearly less sophisticated than either the *Tractatus Origenis* or the *De Fide*.

³⁴⁵ This is precisely what he did with his *De Fide* (2), drawing a good deal of critical response.

nuances of the controversy and set it aside, turning instead to composing his *De Fide*, relying on Hilary and Phoebadius, rather than Tertullian and Novatian.

Gregory's use of the *Song* to construct an ecclesial identity locates him firmly within the Latin interpretive tradition, in which this poem served as a key locus for reflection upon the nature of the corporate church. Cyprian, as we saw in Chapter One, used individual passages from the *Song* to demarcate the boundaries of the true church, in order to demonstrate who did – and who did not – have access to the genuine sacraments. Although early in the rebaptism controversy he was concerned primarily with using the *Song* to establish a contrast between those who are *intus* and those who are *foris positi*, he came to see in the *Song* an image of a church united in doctrine and liturgical practice. In Chapter Two, we traced how Cyprian's Donatist and catholic successors in North Africa fought for decades over the proper interpretation of these passages, which could disclose where the true church lay and what its character was like. Parmenian used the *Song* to enumerate the six 'gifts [*dotes*]' of the church; Tyconius found within the poem evidence for the bipartite character of the church, containing both evil and good alike; finally, the later Donatists rested their case for the special election of the African church on *Song* 1:7. Likewise, in Spain, catholics and Novatianists clashed over the nature of the church – was there room for impure sinners within its community? Simpronian, although a Novatianist, followed Cyprian in using the *Song* to articulate a firm dividing line between those within the church and those without; as a pure and innocent dove, there was no room for sin within. Pacian, however, offers a different interpretation of these verses, in particular using the horticultural analogy from *Song* 4:12-15 to articulate a compassionate doctrine of the church that leaves room for failure and repentance.

Since a number of the disputed passages occur later in the *Song* and are not covered in Gregory's *Tractatus*, few specific points of contact with these writers are available. It should, however, be noted that Gregory's exegesis of *Song* 1:5 and 1:7 bears striking resemblance to the interpretations offered by Tyconius and the Donatists. But there are more clues available about his inheritance of the Latin ecclesiological tradition. In the sections above, we traced the relationship of a number of passages of

the *Tractatus* to the *Sermo* of Hippolytus and the *Homilies* and *Commentary* on the *Song* of Origen. What is striking is Gregory's considerable reliance upon the ecclesiological sections of Origen's *Commentary*; there are few instances of parallels with either Origen's *Homilies*, which generally focuses upon the soul, or the *Sermo* of Hippolytus.³⁴⁶ Rufinus, however, did not translate the *Commentary* until 410, long after Gregory's death. How, therefore, would Gregory have been able to use the text? The most likely answer is that Victorinus of Poetovio incorporated these passages into his own *Commentary* and bequeathed them to Gregory. Thus even in its debt to Origen, the *Tractatus* does not represent the brave new world of *Song* exegesis that both Matter and Henry claim. Rather, it attests the complexity and nuance of the early Latin interpretive tradition itself. There are, indeed, key differences that indicate Victorinus' commentary was not simply a translation. First, there is the complete the absence of any 'psychological' interpretation of the *Song*; this clearly suggests that this element of Origen's work was not incorporated into Victorinus' commentary. Secondly, Gregory offers no 'literal' interpretation of the *Song* – that is, he offers no reflections on the dramatic sequence of the text, as does Origen. This is in keeping with the exegetical method of the *Tractatus Origenis*, in which Gregory frequently passes over the literal or historical level of the text and expounds straightaway its typological meaning. But this may also indicate that Victorinus did not follow Origen in giving a 'dramatic' reading of the text, either.

Gregory is, moreover, a key witness not only to early Latin interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, but his homiletic corpus in its entirety provides us with a rare glimpse into pre-Hieronymian biblical exegesis and preaching in the West. In Part Two, we gave a detailed analysis of the sources that Gregory used and the method that he followed in his exposition of scripture. Tertullian, Novatian, (pseudo-)Cyprian, and Victorinus were all key influences, from whom he borrowed lengthy passages, at times verbatim. Victorinus is particularly interesting, for Gregory seems to have picked up a number of Origenian and Hippolytan passages from him. Gregory's method, however, owes

³⁴⁶ Similarities with the following passages were noted above: Origen, *Comm. In Cant.* 1.1 (*Song* 1:2a); 1.2 (*Song* 1:2b); 1.3 (*Song* 1:3); 2.1 (*Song* 1:5); 2.4 (*Song* 1:7); 4.3 (*Song* 2:15).

nothing to the Alexandrian. He follows the more ancient ‘proof from prophecy’ model, where individual elements in the biblical text are mined for their typological significance, with the narrative of the text itself being of little value.

But Gregory, much like the early Latin tradition of *Song* exegesis that his work preserves, slowly faded into the shadows. It is hoped that this study has shed some light on these darkened corners of early church history.

APPENDIX ONE

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO RECENSIONS OF THE TRACTATUS DE EPITHALAMIO

Comparison of Short (ω1) and Long Recensions (ω2)

Book 1

1.1

ω1: per Salomonem

ω2: per vatem integrum Salomonem

ω1: sponsum autem Christum et sponsam Ecclesiam

ω2: sponsum autem Christum esse et sponsam Ecclesiam

ω1: *amicus autem sponsi stat et audit eum et gaudio gaudet propter vocem sponsi*

ω2: *amicus autem sponsi stans et audiens vocem eius prae gaudio exhilaratur* (Jn 3,29)

1.2

ω1: hic autem Christi et Ecclesiae vox psallentis

ω2: hic autem dei et Ecclesiae vox psallentis

1.3

ω2 (adds): et quia grammaticus noster ac peritissimus legis beatus apostolus...legitimam et firmissimam retinere possimus.

1.4

ω1: *quoniam bona sunt ubera tua super vinum*

ω2: *quoniam meliora sunt ubera tua super vinum* (Ct 1,2)

ω1: ecclesiae etenim venerandae et immaculae virginis ad Christum filium dei...vox est

ω2: ecclesiae etenim venerandae immaculae virginis vox est ad Christum filium dei...verba facientis

1.5

ω1: caritatis suscepit

ω2: caritatis accipit

1.8

ω2 (adds): nec virtutem ipsam videas nec artem cognoscas

1.10

ω1: id est evangeliorum fontes

ω2: id est evangeliorum fontes aquae

1.12

ω2 (adds): et apostolus ait: *nos bonus odor Christi sumus* (2 Cor 2,14) et alibi: *gustate et videte quoniam suavis est dominus* (Ps 33,9)

1.15-16

ω2 (adds): exinanivit et evacuavit adumbratum nomen eorum regum, qui Christi imaginaliter dicebantur. [16] Denique ex quo hic verus Christus advenit, cuius *bonus odor mundo innotuit*, nemo ex eo rex vel sacerdos christus est appellatus et ideo ait: *unguentum exinanitum nomen tuum* (Ct 1,3).

1.17

ω1: non putemus spiritum sanctum

ω2: non putetis, dilectissimi fratres, spiritum sanctum

1.18

ω2 (adds): et *Christum, dei sapientiam, non receperunt* (Col 3,9; 1 Cor 1,24)

1.19

ω2 (adds): denique cum primum Christus venisset in synagogam, tunc eum magis istae sequi et amare coeperunt quam populus Israel, unde mulier Canaanaea, quae imaginem Ecclesiae ex gentibus ostendebat, Christum fideliter sequebatur...ut amore Christi detenta Ecclesia semper iter praeceptorum sequi debeat.

1.20

ω1: id est penetralia caeli

ω2: id est in aditum caelorum

1.22

ω1: et addidit: *diligimus...*

ω2: haec sunt propter quae *diligimus...*

1.23

ω1: sed attendite, quanta altitudine sensus loquatur spiritus sanctus

ω2: sed attendite mysterium verbi et videte, quanta altitudine sensus loquatur...

1.25

ω1: Ante adventum enim filii dei fusca erat, quia necdum in ipso crediderat

ω2: Ante adventum enim filii dei fusca erat, ut saepe dixi, ex gentibus Ecclesia, quia...

1.26-27

ω2 (adds): sicut apostolus ait: *ut exhibeat Ecclesiam non habentem maculam vel rugam* (Eph 5,27), hoc est nullam maculam delicti, nullam rugam perversae doctrinae...iam charismatum donis ornat. [27] Proinde manifestum nobis esse debet, hac de causa fuscā se dixisse, vel propter vitia gentilitatis vel propter veteris hominis delicta, ex cuius origine censebatur, formosam autem propter adsumptionem dei et fidei sanctitatem.

1.28

ω2 (adds): <Hoc> in loco propheticus <spiritus> ex voce Ecclesiae, quae ex gentibus congregandae erat, exemplum posuit dicens

1.29

ω1: Nam idola gentium, Astarten et Camos, sed et lucos idolis fabricavit. Amavit quippe mulieres Moabitidas et Amantidias, quas secutus a priscae legis conversatione declinavit. Fuscā itaque se dicit propter transgressionem Adae et peccata parentum, sed et decoram propter conversationem Christi, quam habet in fide et sanctitate.

ω2: quod ipse Salomon idola gentium, Astarten et Camos, sed et lucos idolorum Sidoniorum et cetera simulacra coluerit vel quod amator fuerit mulierum, id est, ab earum carne revelli non poterat, - quoniam necdum fuisset adsumpta -, et quia generalem summam humani corporis dominus in semet ipso suscepit, unde et apostolus *peccatum* inquit *pro nobis factus est* (2 Cor 5,21), id est *carnem hominis peccatoris* induendo (Rom 8,3), quam *carnem Ecclesiam* esse apostolus definivit, *cuius nos membra sumus* (Eph 5,30). Ideo et *tabernaculum cedar*, id est vitium gentilitatis, *pellem salomonis*, id est veteris hominis conversationem, ex consortio eiusdem carnis esse dicebat offuscatam propter transgressionem Adae et peccata parentum, sed et decoram nimis propter conversationem Christi, quam habet in fide et sanctitate.

1.30

ω1: rubicundae propter passionem sanguinis Christi, iacintinae propter operum sanctitatem.

ω2: rubicundae propter passionem sanguinis, iacintinae vero propter firmitatem et splendorem virgineae sanctitatis.

1.31

ω1: accepimus per Iesum Christum, qui est benedictus in saecula saeculorum.

ω2: accepimus. Sed iam sufficit modo istis capitulis disseruisse. Reliquum quod sequitur favente dei numine et clementia eius caritati vestrae disserere non tardabo, deo itaque patri omnipotenti gratias agentes per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum.

Book 2

2.1

ω2 (adds): et quia dixit: *non tu radicem portas sed radix te* (Rom 11,8), per hoc matrem suam secundum carnem synagogam appellat.

2.2

ω1: quod omnes credentes in eo variis pressurarum generibus adflixerunt. Unde et Saulus persecutor ecclesiarum fuerat destinatus.

ω2: quod omnes credentes in eo variis poenarum generibus adflixerunt. Unde beatus Paulus, dum adhuc Saulus diceretur, persecutor ecclesiarum fuerit destinatus. Ideo ait: *filiis matris meae pugnaverunt adversum me.*

2.3

ω1: Hanc vineam populi Israelis non custodivit Ecclesia.

ω2: Sed hanc vineam populis Israelis noluit custodire Ecclesia.

2.4

ω1: Hanc derelictam apostolus Paulus vineam de persecutore apostolus meruit fieri, nolens legalem observantiae custodire circumcisionem carnis, neomeniae et sabbatorum dies festos et cetera, quae in lege inveniuntur esse praecepta, sed mandata Christi maluit custodire.

ω2: Beatus apostolus Paulus relicta hac vinea populi Israelis, quam custodiendam acceperat, de persecutore apostolus esse meruit, quia *noluit iustitiam*, ut ipse dicit, *quae ex lege est, facere, sed maluit eam, quae ex fide est, adimplere* (Phil 3,9), id est noluit legalem munificentiam observare, circumcisionem carnis, observantias escarum, sabbati curam, neomenias et dies festos purificationis et cetera, quae in lege Moysi inveniuntur esse praecepta. Haec ergo omnia, quae in lege Moysi inveniuntur esse praecepta. Haec ergo omnia, quae in vinea populi deputantur, noluit servare et ideo dicit: *filiis matris meae*, id est synagogae populi, *oppugnaverunt me*, quia relicta vinea Israel praecepta Christi maluit custodire.

2.5

ω1: *ubi pascis ubi cubas in meridie?* (Ct, 17)

ω2: *ubi pascis, ubi manes in meridiano?* (Ct 1,7)

ω1: *tolle infantem et matrem eius Mariam et fuge in Aegyptum, ut impleretur, quod scriptum est: ex Aegypto vocabo filium meum*

ω2: *ut tollere[n]t infantem et Mariam, matrem domini, et in Aegyptum secederent, ut impleretur quod scriptum est: ex Aegypto vocabo filium meum* (Mt 2,13-16)

2.6

ω1: praestat tamen calor spiritualis plus quam carnalis fragilitas, merito meridiano nuncupatur.

ω2: prastat tamen plus calor spiritalis, quam carnalis fragilitas operatur, ac proinde dei et hominis in eadem, ut dixi, carne temperamentum est. Quod prope saeculi finem susceptum est, meridianum spiritaliter nuncupatur.

2.7

ω1: divinae moderationis

ω2: evangelicae moderationis

2.8-9

ω2 (adds): *O altitudo sapientiae et scientiae dei, quam investigabiles viae eius, qui vocat ea, quae non sunt, tamen ea, quae sunt* (Rom 11,33; 4,17), ac tali allegoria verborum ea, quae necdum erant, iam tunc prescius nuntiabat, et quae suis quibusque temporibus complenda erant, per typos et imagines indicabat! *Adnuntia mihi, quem dilexit anima mea*, hoc utique Christo dicebat Ecclesia, *ubi pascis, ubi manes in meridiano*, id est in evangelii tui temperamento et rationem et definitionem totamque veritatem ostende mihi,

2.10

ω2 (adds): amicos ex fide, fratres ex consortio carnis, *coheredes quoque regni ex adoptione filiorum* (Rm 8, 15.17.23).

2.11

ω1: pseudoapostolos futuros...ne ignorans capiar et circumducatur et sequar haereticam factionem

ω2: pseudoapostolos et circumventores futuros...ne ignorans capiar et circumducatur ac sequar per separationem nominis tui haereticam factionem

2.13

ω1: per seductionem falsorum sacerdotum

ω2: per praeverificationem falsorum sacerdotum

2.14

ω1: *lupi rapaces non parcentes gregi, qui devorarent plebes Christi* (Act 20,29)

ω2: *lupi rapaces non parcentes gregi*, id est haeretici, *qui devorarent plebes Christi* per doctrinam ob commissionem illicitam.

2.15

ω2 (adds): Cum enim sancta et inviolata simplex columba Ecclesia falsos, ut iam dixi, doctores et corruptores virginitatis suae graviter pertimesceret, qui sub velamine sacerdotum dei, hoc est qui *sub vestibus ovium lupi rapaces*, in quibus praedixerat dominus venturi erant, et certa definitione evangelicae veritatis requireret rationem, *ubi pasceret, ubi maneret in meridiano*, id est, ut dixi, in temperamento dei et hominis – ne

quis per verisimilia exempla aut deum ab homine aut hominem a deo separaret -, tunc respondit ei dominus: *nisi cognoveris te decoram* inquit *inter mulieres*.

2.17

ω1: quia *fornicatam esse* saepenumero *post deos alienos* sancta scriptura testatur

ω2: quas <*moechatas*> saepenumero *post deos alienos* caelestis scriptura testatur

ω2 (adds): *nisi <in eius>dem bonitate p<ermans>eris*

2.18

ω2 (adds): quomodo secessit populus Israel, quos prae multitudine sua *greges* appellat. Comminantis vox est: *nisi te cognoveris*.

2.19

ω1: audi apostolum dicentem

ω2: quod quantum ista se habeant, probat beatus apostolus, qui, cum ad ecclesiam scriberet, ait

2.20

ω1: et ideo Ecclesiae talium ingeruntur exempla, ne et nos similia facientes simili animadversione plectamur

ω2: et ideo Ecclesiae, id est Christianis omnibus, talia ingeruntur exempla, ne et nos similia facientes simili animadversione damnemur, qui Ecclesia nuncupatur.

2.21-22

ω2 (adds): Et proinde nisi cognovisset se Ecclesia inter mulieres speciosam, in qua fide et sanctitate et bonis operibus, inter mulieres haereticorum et Israelis plebes pasceret haedos suos, id est peccatores suos, quae agnos vel oves pascere deberet, si se speciosam cognosceret, sicut Petro dictum est, super quem fundamentum est Ecclesiae: *pasce oves meas*. Ac per hoc Ecclesia, quamdiu catholicam integritatem tenet, non haedos, sed oves pascit; at ubi non cognoscit speciem et decorum fidei suae et per transgressionem corrumpitur, statim audit.

2.23

ω2 (adds): Sed *in tabernaculis* inquit *pastorum*. *Pastores* apostolos dicit, *tabernacula* vero pastorum congregationes sunt ecclesiarum, ubi plebes apostolicae conveniebant. Et proinde quamquam *tabernacula pastorum*, id est fabricas ecclesiarum apostolicas teneas, tamen non oves Christi, sed haedos tuos pascis, nisi virginem te et speciosam esse cognoveris.

2.24

ω1: cum necdum credidissent

ω2: cum necdum in Christo credidissent

2.25

ω1: Pharaonem autem diabolum figurari nulla est dubitatio...sic diabolus in saeculo tyrannidem gerit

ω2: Pharaonem autem diabolum esse nulla est dubitatio...sic diabolus in saeculo tyrannidem exercet...(adds) Equas enim, ut dixi iam, plebes gentium, requirebat, quas licet suas esse dominus ante praesciret, ante adventum tamen suum sub iugo Pharaonis, id est diaboli, curribus tenebantur.

2.26-28

ω2 (adds): Denique apostolus ait: *fuimus et nos aliquando filii irae* (Eph 2,3), quando sub iugo Pharaonis, id est quando vasa diaboli eramus. Quando vasa diaboli, nisi quando *equae ad libidines hinnientes et luxuriantes* in omni vanitate aurigae diaboli vitiorum curribus vacabamus? Sicut Iheremias ait: *equi inquit libidinantes ad uxores proximi sui hinniebant* (Jr 5,8). [27] Sed iam Christi gratia liberati de iugo tyrannicae servitutis et filii dei per fidem effecti atque caelesti gloriae desinati puro corde et sincera devotione in omni sanctitate et iustitia hanc eandem fidem tenemus, per quam vivimus et salvamur, quia *fides inquit tua te salvum fecit* (Mt 9,22). [28] Semper incorrupta et inviolata devotione custodire debemus, quia per Christum dei filium diabolicae luxuria curribus liberati sumus et iugo gravissimo servitutis exuti, ne rursus interveniente perfidia ad eadem quae evasimus revolvamur, dicente domino: *ecce, iam sanus factus es, noli peccare, ne quid tibi deterius veniat* (Jn 5,14).

2.32

ω2 (adds): Et ideo genua oculis coniuncta posteriores apostolos patriarchis prioribus socios et participes ostendebat.

2.34

ω2 (adds): Variae etenim plumae turturis varietatem charismatum bonorum meritorum populorum quoque in Christo credentium perspicue manifestant. Et haec est varietas plumarum quoque in similitudinem turturis hoc in loco.

2.36-37

ω2 (adds): *Populus enim inquit dura cervice est* (Ex 34,9), sed nunc Ecclesiae cervix humilis et submissa et caelestis disciplinae, ut dixi, iugo subdita martyrii et virginitatis atque omnium bonorum operum ornamentis est decorata. [37] Nam et sicuti a cervice descendunt nervi, qui totum corpus complectuntur et continent, sic a *capite Ecclesiae, quod est Christum*, per humilem evangelicae disciplinae cervicem descendunt nervi caritatis et fidei, qui omnes credentes in uno corpore complectuntur et continent religionis vinculo ligati.

2.39

ω2 (adds): Ac per hoc dicit: *Cervix tua sicut redimiculum ornamenti, similitudinem auri faciemus tibi cum distinctionibus argenti*. Spiritales homines in Ecclesia ornamento futuros esse perspicue indicabat.

2.41

ω2 (adds): necdum aqua baptismatis lota necdum *templum dei* sancti spiritus dedicatione *effecta* (1 Cor 3,16)

2.42-43

ω2 (adds): Unde dominus in evangelio dicit: *quotquot ante me fuerunt, fures fuerunt et latrones* (Jn 10,8). Antequam enim in hunc mundum Christus adveniret, nox ignorantiae et tenebrae erroris erant, antequam Iesus Christus vita veniret, *in nobis mors omnibus dominabatur, antequam fides veniret*, infidelitas crassabatur, antequam *templum dei efficeremur*, diversorium daemonum eramus. [43] Hi sunt fures et latrones: ignorantia, perfidia, immunditia, spurcitia, avaritia, fraus, libido, et omnis diabolica operatio, quae in omnibus permanebant, antequam <verbum> *dei caro fieret et habitaret in nobis* (Jn 1,14). Et inde hoc in loco ait: *quosque rex in declinatione sua*, hoc est dicere...Ipsi deo patri omnipotenti gratias agentes per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, qui est benedictus in saecula saeculorum.

APPENDIX TWO

THE EPISCOPAL CAREER OF GREGORY OF ELVIRA

There is a general agreement in modern scholarship regarding the key dates and events of Gregory's life. He is believed to have been born around 327, likely in Baetica, ordained bishop of Elvira around 357, and died around 392.¹ He became personally involved in the 'Arian' controversy shortly after becoming bishop when he was pressed to hold communion with the 'transgressor' Ossius.² Following the synod of Ariminum (359), he circulated two editions of a pro-Nicene work known as the *De Fide Orthodoxa Contra Arianos* between 360 and 365.³ Sometime in the 360s he forged a relationship with the schismatic Sardinian bishop Lucifer of Cagliari, perhaps even becoming leader of the Luciferian movement upon Lucifer's death, and he refused to hold communion with any bishop who subscribed to a homoian formula.⁴ His main extant writings are the *De Fide Orthodoxa*, a defense of the orthodoxy of the Nicene creed and its watchword, *homoousion*; the *Tractatus Origenis*, a series of twenty homilies on the Old Testament and *Acts*; the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, a five book commentary on *Song of Songs* 1:1-3:4; the *De Arca Noe*, a homily on the story of the flood; and a number of short or fragmentary works of dubious authenticity. The exegetical works are all dated towards the end of his life.⁵

It should be noted straightaway that there is uncertainty about nearly every event in his life – including the dates of his birth, ordination and death. This is the inescapable

¹ Gómez, *Exégesis*, p. 20; Schulz-Flügel, pp. 20-23; J. Pascual Torró, *Gregorio de Elvira: Tratados Sobre los Libros de las Santas Escrituras* (Fuentes Patristica 9; Madrid, 1997), 11-12. Collantes Lozano, *Estudio*, p. 21, takes a more cautious approach, affirming only that Gregory was still alive in 392.

² Collantes Lozano, *Estudio*, pp. 19-20; D.H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflict* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), p. 51.

³ R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-81* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005 [1988]), p. 520; Schulz-Flügel, p. 21; M. Simonetti, *Gregorio di Elvira: La fede* (Torino, 1975), pp. 12-21. T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 283, n. 53, prefers the date of 358 for the first recension.

⁴ Hanson, *Search*, p. 519; Mazzorra, *Luciferianismo*, *passim* (esp. the lengthy bibliography at pp. 19-26); Pascual Torró, *Gregorio*, p. 13.

⁵ None of these works, with the exception of several manuscripts of the *Tractatus de Epithalamio*, have come down under Gregory's name. For a full discussion of authorship, contents, and dates, see Part Two.

consequence of the utter paucity of sources about his life. I shall argue in the following few pages that scholars have become rather too confident about the accuracy of these key dates. In particular, I believe that the dates of his birth and his ordination are fixed rather later than they should be, without any particularly compelling reasons for so doing. When all the evidence is looked at, it will become apparent that 327 and 357 are the absolute *termini* for his birth and ordination, rather than the probable years in which these events occurred. This argument will allow us to date several of his exegetical works – including the *Tractatus de Epithalamio* – to an earlier, and I would suggest more appropriate, date.

There are three key late fourth century ‘biographical’ sources that give us information about Gregory: Jerome’s *Chronicon* and *De Viris Illustribus*, and the *Libellus Precum ad Imperatores* of Faustinus and Marcellinus. We shall examine each source individually, considering the pertinent information it can disclose about Gregory’s life. In the *De Viris Illustribus*, Jerome writes: ‘Gregory Baeticus, bishop of Elvira, wrote a number of treatises in mediocre style, even into old age, and an elegant book *On the Faith*. He is said to be alive today’.⁶ Jerome provides us with no specific information regarding when Gregory became bishop; this can only be deduced from the *Libellus Precum*, to which we shall turn in a moment. Scholars have generally taken Jerome’s assertion of Gregory’s extreme old age to mean that he died soon after the composition of the work – that is, around 392/3. But it remains possible that Jerome’s information was not up-to-date; when did he hear it said [*dicitur*] that Gregory was still living and who was his source? Was Gregory such a prominent bishop that news of his passing would quickly have spread from Baetica to Bethlehem? In all likelihood, Jerome’s source is his *amicus* Dexter, the son of Pacian of Barcelona.⁷ The two seem recently to have been in contact: Dexter sent him a copy of his ‘Universal History’ and Jerome in turn dedicated the *De*

⁶ *De Vir. Ill.* 105 (PL 23:703A): *Gregorius, Baeticus, Eliberi Episcopus, usque ad extremam senectutem diversos mediocri sermone tractatus composuit, et de Fide elegantem librum, qui hodieque superesse dicitur.*

⁷ On Nummius Aemilianus Dexter, see *PLRE* Dexter 3, p. 251; J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364-425* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 111-12, 133, 259.

Viris Illustribus to him.⁸ Dexter, however, had gone east with Theodosius in 379, was proconsul of Asia 379/87, served as the *comes rei privatae* in 387, and was praetorian prefect of Italy in 395.⁹ His information on ecclesiastical events in Spain, particularly in the south, was thus likely limited. We cannot, therefore, use Jerome's remark as a sound basis upon which to date the death of Gregory. He may have lived some years beyond 392, but it is equally possible that he had died several years earlier.

It is the *Libellus Precum ad Imperatores* – a petition for tolerance to the emperors Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius composed by the Roman Luciferian presbyters Faustinus and Marcellinus in 383/4¹⁰ – that provides us with a narrative of the beginning of Gregory's episcopacy. The work is a justification of the theological orthodoxy and ecclesiastical integrity of the 'Luciferian' church – a label that the authors themselves reject (24.86); they simply believe that they are the small remnant of orthodox believers. It opens with a tendentious history of the 'Arian' controversy from Nicaea to Ariminum, demonstrating the complicity of the majority of Western bishops in the Arian heresy (3.5-13.50) – including the venerable Ossius, who is singled out for particular condemnation in a libellous assault (9.33-11.41) – and presenting the dangers of holding communion with any bishop who has ever subscribed to a heretical formula (14.51-2).

Gregory of Elvira appears several times in the narrative. The first occurrence is when, as a new and principled bishop, he refuses hold 'nefarious communion' with Ossius following his assent to the Sirmian manifesto.¹¹ But the *Libellus* states that Ossius, in exchange for subscribing to the manifesto, received a *iussio* from Constantius that required all bishops to communicate with him under threat of exile.¹² Gregory was thus summoned to Cordoba to stand trial before Ossius and Clement, the *vicarius*

⁸ *De Vir. Ill.* 132. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, p. 133, suggests that the exchange of courtesies may indicate that Dexter had visited Jerome in Bethlehem.

⁹ *PLRE*, p. 251.

¹⁰ It must be placed between the deaths of Gratian (25 Aug 383) and Damasus (11 Dec 384).

¹¹ *Lib.* 9.33 (SC 504, p. 140): *Sed ad sanctum Gregorium, Eliberitanae civitatis constantissimum episcopum, fidelis nuntius detulit impiam Ossii praevaricationem; unde et non acquiescit, memor sacrae fidei ac divini iudicii, in eius nefariam communionem.*

¹² *Lib.* 9.32 (SC 504, p. 140).

Hispaniarum,¹³ and the authors depict him as Christ before Pilate (10.34-5). The appearance of this *rudis episcopus* in the city, challenging the venerable Ossius, caused a stir of attention.¹⁴ The scene plays out predictably: Gregory, the holy young bishop, relies upon the word of God; Ossius, aged and worldly, upon the word of the emperor. The latter is exposed as a heretic (10.36). Embarrassed and enraged, Ossius demands that Clement send Gregory into exile in accord with the emperor's wishes. His guilt, however, is so patent that the *vicarius*, who is not even a Christian, refuses (10.36). Seeing that Ossius will not be assuaged, Gregory prays to God for assistance, who responds by striking Ossius dead.¹⁵ Clement is so awed by Gregory's holiness and power that he prostrates himself before him and becomes a Christian (10.38).

The story is clearly apocryphal, which has been noted in scholarship.¹⁶ If the emperor did indeed rule that all those who refused to communicate with Ossius should be sent into exile, Clement would have no grounds to protect Gregory. And the sequence of events concerning Ossius' death and Clement's prostration at the feet of Gregory has all the marks of hagiography, not proper history. Moreover, whether or not Athanasius can be trusted in his assertion that Ossius recanted on his deathbed, he makes it clear that the aged bishop did not set aside his scruples in Sirmium: he never anathematized his dear friend, as he was pressed to do (*Hist. Ar.* 45). Ossius clearly made a compromise so that he could depart and die with dignity, surely weakened by his ordeal.¹⁷ If he made it back to Cordoba, which is not entirely certain, he would likely have gone into quiet retirement, rather than launch an aggressive campaign of persecution against his detractors.

There may, however, be a kernel of truth in the story. What has not been noticed is that the story serves an etiological function: 'This is why Gregory alone out of all the

¹³ He is otherwise unattested; cf. *PLRE* Clementinus 1, p. 215.

¹⁴ *Lib.* 10.34 (SC 504, p. 142).

¹⁵ *Lib.* 10.38 (SC 504, p. 144): *Ecce repente Osius, cum sententiam conatus exprimere, os vertit, distorquens pariter et cervicem de sessu in terram eliditur atque illic expirat.*

¹⁶ Collantes Lozano, *Estudio*, pp. 18-9; Pascual Torró, *Tratados*, pp. 11-2.

¹⁷ He died sometime in late 357, before Athanasius completed his *Historia Arianorum*. See Barnes, *Athanasius*, p. 126.

number of defenders of the true faith was neither put to flight nor suffered exile'.¹⁸ This fact clearly called for some explanation. Thus a great yarn may have been spun around Gregory's actual refusal to hold communion with Ossius. Eusebius of Vercelli's letter to Gregory, to be placed c. 360/1, clearly asserts that Gregory had 'withstood' Ossius.¹⁹ It is not clear what he means by this, but it is not improbable that Constantius would have set some measure in place to coerce the pro-Nicene Spanish bishops into communicating with Ossius. Gregory may also have made a public denunciation of Ossius and his impiety. It was likely Ossius' death due to old age and maltreatment that rendered the issue moot and spared Gregory from punishment.

Mythic and etiological elaboration do not make for good history. Yet scholars still persist in using the account to date the start of Gregory's episcopacy to 357, since Faustinus and Marcellinus call him *rudis episcopus*. Nearly thirty years separate their account from the event – as does a considerable geographical distance – so there is no reason why we should take this as a precise remark. Indeed, it serves an important literary function of the story, where the unknown new bishop stands up to the aged and (in)famous transgressor and nonetheless prevails. I thus propose that, as there is likely some historical truth to the account, Gregory cannot have become bishop *after* 357, but that there is no reason why he cannot have ascended to the episcopacy some years earlier, in the late 340s or early 350s. Moreover, it is also surprising that scholars continue to date his birth to 327 – subtracting the canonical minimum age of 30 from 357 – when the account nowhere reveals his age. I would argue that Gregory cannot have been born much after 320, but that this date could be considerably earlier, since there is no good reason to believe that he was exactly thirty when he became bishop.

¹⁸ *Lib.* 10.40 (SC 504, p. 146): *Inde est quod solus Gregorius ex numero vindicantium integram fidem, nec in fugam versus, nec passus exilium.*

¹⁹ *FH* 3.2.1 (Wickham, p. 95; Feder A II, 1). Some scholars have alleged that the letter is a Luciferian forgery; most notable is L. Saltet, 'Fraudes littéraires des schismatiques lucifériens' *BLE* (1906), pp. 300-26, at pp. 315-26. Williams, *Ambrose*, p. 51, n. 66 has recently made a compelling argument in favour of the authenticity of the letter, arguing that Eusebius clearly presupposes that repentant bishops can remain in their office – a point firmly opposed by the Luciferians. It is, indeed, not surprising that Eusebius, currently in his third region of exile (the Thebaid), would take a rather dim view of the bishops who lapsed at Ariminum (and remained unrepentant) and were comfortably presiding in their own churches.

The *Libellus* is also used to substantiate the claim that Gregory had ties with the Luciferians. In a passage near the end of the work, Marcellinus and Faustinus claim that Gregory went to visit Lucifer in Sardinia. He admired both his ‘understanding of the divine scriptures [*doctrinam scripturarum divinarum*]’ and ‘his life [*ipsam vitam*]’.²⁰ Indeed, they remark that even one so holy as Gregory admired him.²¹ The two may have had some sort of relationship. In the *Chronicon*, composed c. 380. Under the heading of the 287th Olympiad, Jerome writes: ‘Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari, dies, who with Gregory, bishop in the Spains, and Philo of Libya, never mixed with the Arian depravity’.²² The three bishops clearly shared an ideological opposition to holding communion with any bishop who had subscribed to an Arian formula. What, however, was the extent of Gregory’s relationship with Lucifer and did he become a Luciferian?

The question turns on the proper interpretation of the *Libellus Precum*, which is the lynchpin for the Luciferian argument. Henry Chadwick, for example, asserts that the *Libellus* ‘treats Gregory of Elvira as being in every sense a full member of the Luciferian group’.²³ There is, however, no evidence for this.²⁴ Faustinus and Marcellinus seem, rather, to be using Gregory’s saintly reputation as a means of validating the orthodoxy of Lucifer. Gregory occupies a particularly important role because he is, at least according to the authors, the only bishop who withstood Ossius and the other ‘Arians’ without suffering exile or any other penalty. The lengthy narrative at *Lib.* 33-40, considered above, establishes his divine power and authority, by which he secured his protection. His visit to Lucifer in Sardinia is not a ‘passing of the torch’, as it were, but a means of demonstrating Gregory’s approbation and admiration for Lucifer. There remains no clear historical evidence whatsoever to indicate that Gregory was a part of the Luciferian church.

²⁰ *Lib.* 10.90 (SC 504, p. 194).

²¹ *Lib.* 10.90 (SC 504, p. 194): *Iam quantus vir Lucifer fuerit, cum illum admiretur et Gregorius.*

²² *Chron.* (PL 27:695): *Lucifer Caralitanus episcopus moritur, qui cum Gregorio episcopo Hispaniarum, et Philone Libyae, numquam se Arianæ miscuit pravitati.*

²³ H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

²⁴ See. F.J. Buckley, ‘Gregory of Elvira’ *Classical Folia* 18/1 (1964), pp. 13-16; Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginité*, p. 78.

Both Henry and Buckley assert that Gregory was thus used by the authors of the *Libellus* because he must have had an excellent reputation amongst catholics.²⁵ This, too, is an erroneous conclusion. The *Libellus* also relates the story of the Spanish presbyter Vincentius, who suffered persecution at the hands of Hyginus, bishop of Cordoba, and Lucosius, an otherwise unknown bishop, because he ‘held communion with Gregory’.²⁶ It is difficult to see how unassailable Gregory’s credentials were in catholic eyes if communication with him resulted in harsh punishment. Moreover, Theodosius’ rescript to Cygenius, praetorian prefect of the diocese of Oriens,²⁷ explicitly makes a provision that Gregory is to be unmolested.²⁸ This suggests that the emperor understood that Gregory himself may have been in need of protection. I suggest the possibility that Faustinus and Marcellinus used Gregory to validate the sanctity of Lucifer not only on account of his reputation for piety and faithfulness, but also because he was Spanish. This may have been an attempt to flatter Theodosius: the most saintly, uncompromising bishop, who was imbued with such divine power that he could not be removed from his see, shared his homeland.

This analysis of the main primary sources suggests a rather different picture of Gregory’s life. He was born sometime in the early fourth century, likely no later than the year 320. He likely became bishop of Elvira sometime in the late 340s or early 350s and, as a relatively junior bishop, made a brash condemnation of Ossius following his assent to the Sirmian manifesto. He took a rigorist, intransigent line in opposition to the ruling at the synod of Alexandria (362) and likely was a sympathizer of the Luciferians; there is, however, no evidence that he served in any kind of leadership capacity in the Luciferian church. He withdrew from the ecclesiastical scene in Spain well before his death, perhaps fomenting hostilities with bishops from nearby sees on account of his harsh judgment of their forebears.²⁹ Sometime in the 390s, at an old age, Gregory passed on, largely to be forgotten by the church beyond Baetica.

²⁵ Buckley, ‘Gregory of Elvira’, p. 15; Henry, *Song of Songs and Virginity*, p. 78.

²⁶ *Lib.* 73 (SC 504): *beatissimo Gregorio communicaret*.

²⁷ *PLRE* Maternus Cygenius 3, pp. 255-6.

²⁸ *Lex* 8.

²⁹ He appears to have taken no part in the action of the Spanish bishops against Priscillian, his name being conspicuously absent from the list of signatories at Caseraugusta. See H. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, p. 7.

APPENDIX THREE

NUMMIUS AEMILIANUS DEXTER

In *De viris illustribus* 132, Jerome writes about a certain Dexter, who is ‘the son of Pacian, whom I mentioned above, distinguished in the world [*ad saeculum*] and devoted to the Christian faith, I have heard wrote a *Universal History* dedicated to me, which I have not yet read’.¹ The question is whether this is the same Dexter who was the inspiration for the *De viris illustribus* and to whom that treatise is dedicated, and who Jerome mentions in the *Apologia adversus Rufinum* as being his ‘friend, who administered the Praetorian Prefecture’.² The latter Dexter must be the Nummius Aemilianus Dexter of Barcelona who was Proconsul of Asia 379/87 and Praetorian Prefect of Italy in 395.³ But is this Nummius Aemilianus Dexter, *amicus* of Jerome, Dexter, son of Pacian? The majority of scholars have made this identification,⁴ and this is the verdict one will find in the *PLRE*.⁵ This identification is further suggested by the index of the *De viris illustribus*, which lists ‘*Dexter Paciani filius, nunc praefectus praetorio*’.⁶

C. Granado has recently built a case for positing two Dexters.⁷ First, there is the obvious chronological problem, since the *De viris illustribus* was composed in 392 but Dexter was not Praetorian Prefect until 395. Granado suggests that this was a later

¹ *De Vir. Ill.* 132 (PL 23:715A).

² *Apol. adv. Ruf.* 2.23.

³ The name Nummius Aemilianus Dexter comes from an inscription on a statue that was erected in Barcelona by the *concilium Asiae* in his honour: *Nummio Aemiliano Dextro v.c. propter insignia bene gesti proconsulatus omnes Asia concessam beneficio principali statuam consecravit* (*PLRE*, p. 251). This Nummius Aemilianus Dexter has been identified with Nummius Aemilianus, proconsul of Asia, who erected a statue in honour of Theodosius: *B.F. Nobilissimae memoriae Theodosio, d.n. Theodosii Aug. patri, Numm. Aemilianus, v.c., proc. Asiae, dedicavit* (reprinted in A. Chastagnol, ‘Les espagnols dans l’aristocratie gouvernementale à l’époque de Théodose’, *Les Empereurs Romains d’Espagne* [Paris, 1965], p. 290). Seven decrees from the Emperors Honorius and Arcadius to Dexter, Praetorian Prefect, are preserved in the *Theodosian Code*, dating from 18 March to 1 Nov 395 (6.4.27; 8.5.53, 54, 8.5; 9.23.2; 11.28.2; 12.1.146).

⁴ See the references in Granado, SC 410, p. 356, n.1.

⁵ *PLRE* i.251: ‘He was a zealous Christian and wrote historical works’. In his excellent monograph, J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, pp. 111-12, does not raise any issues with this identification.

⁶ PL 23:608A.

⁷ Granado, SC 410, pp. 352-8.

scribal interpolation meant to harmonize the two figures. Secondly, he argues that the phrase *Paciani de quo supra dixi filius* was meant to distinguish this Dexter from the one mentioned in the prologue. Thirdly, the fact that Jerome had only heard (*fertur*) that Dexter had written a history meant he did not know him personally. Fourthly, Jerome's general ignorance about Spain, and indeed his imprecision about Pacian, suggests he did not know Dexter, son of Pacian. Granado, moreover, gets around the obvious problem of why Jerome would dedicate a chapter of the *De viris illustribus* to a layman who had only written a single work that he had not even read by suggesting this was repayment for Dexter's dedication of the *Universal History* to him.

The merits of each point are not strong, though the case looks more impressive than it is when all are strung together. While it is far from impossible that Barcelona could produce two contemporary, erudite, educated, devout Christian Dexters, the fact that both have the same hometown must be taken as a strong indicator that they are indeed the same person, especially in the light of other factors. Further, it is unclear why Granado insists that Jerome's statement that Dexter was the son of Pacian was meant to distinguish him from the Dexter of the prologue. In the *De viris illustribus*, if the subject in question held an ecclesiastical or, occasionally, secular office (cf. *De vir ill* 42), Jerome specifies it. Since in 392 Dexter would not have held any office, Jerome may well have thought it fit to associate him with the episcopal office of his father. Moreover, since Nummius Aemilianus was from Barcelona as well, positing two Dexters does not help to explain Jerome's lack of information about the Spanish church. As for the gloss *nunc praefectus praetorio* in the index, Granado gives insufficient reason why Jerome could not himself have inserted this when his friend attained the office (glossing the index would be far easier than rewriting the entry). Even Granado's most compelling point that Jerome seems only to have heard indirectly (*fertur*) about the *Universal History* is not without problems: since that work is dedicated to Jerome, it is likely that there was some relationship between the two. Ultimately, Granado asks us to believe that there are two Dexters, both from Barcelona, both distinguished (*clarus*) Christian men, both with some connection to Jerome. We can, I would argue, say it is

most likely that Jerome's friend, Nummius Aemilianus Dexter, is the son of Pacian of Barcelona.

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